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AINSLEE'S *vs.* AUGUST

¶ We speak of *Ainslee's for May*, *Ainslee's for June*, *Ainslee's for October*. Such months seem in keeping with *Ainslee's*. But when we come to August, the month when all nature is taking a Turkish bath, when a hole in the window screen lets in more troublesome pests than Pandora ever let out, when the dog-day heat curdles the very milk of human kindness—that issue becomes *Ainslee's against August*. It has to be more than ordinarily entertaining. It has to be entertaining enough to overcome the humidity, the mosquitoes, the people who eat oranges and bananas on crowded trains and all the other things that make August what it is. We believe that we have put together a magazine that will do this.

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The Prefix of Patricia	Humphreys Hume
The White Carnation	Frank Condon

¶ We have no fears as to the outcome of

AINSLEE'S *vs.* AUGUST

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THE MAGAZINE THAT ENTERTAINS

Vol. XXIX. No. 6

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Monthly Publication issued by AINSLEE MAGAZINE CO., Seventh Avenue and Fifteenth Street, New York.
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Entered September 11, 1902, at New York as Second-class Matter, under Act of Congress of March 3, 1879.

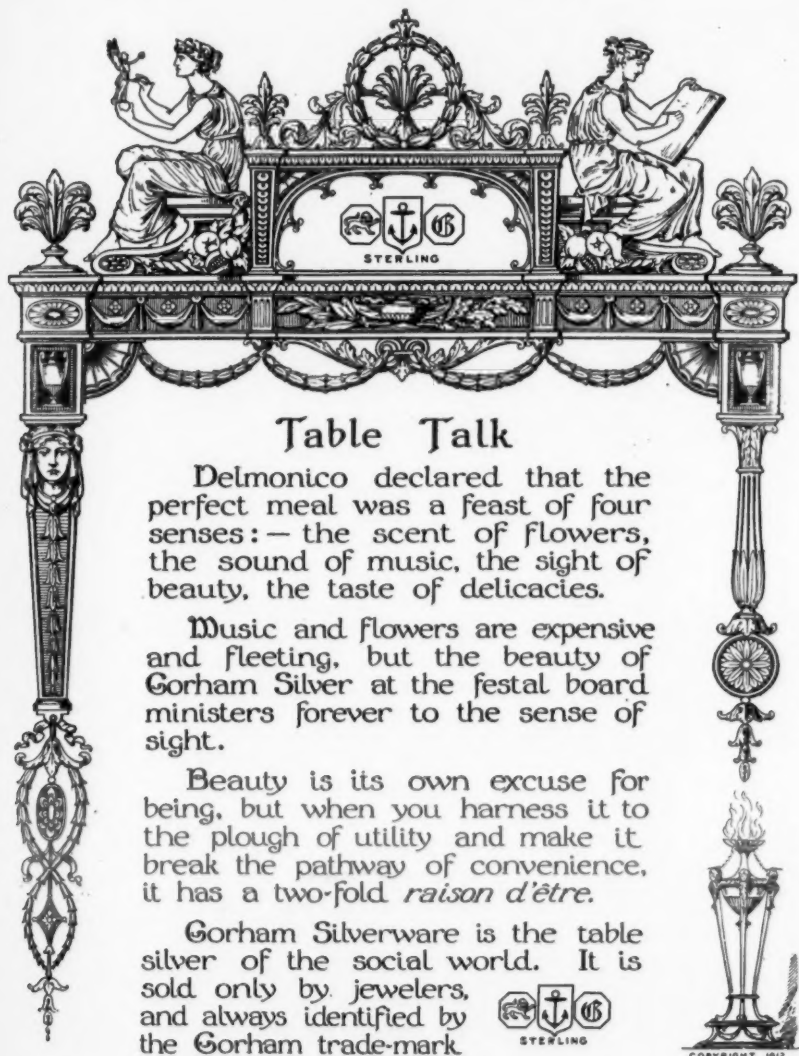


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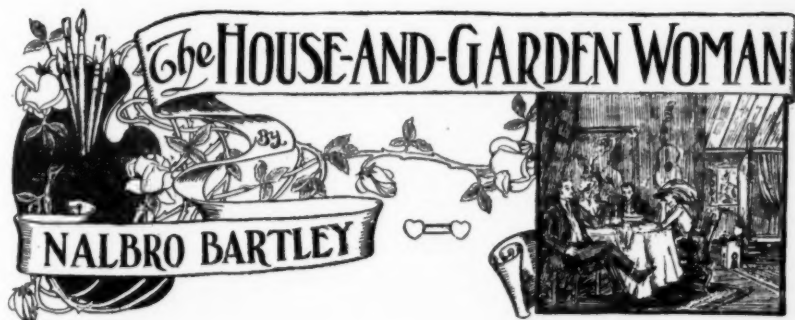
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AINSLEE'S

VOL. XXIX.

JULY, 1912.

No. 6.



CHAPTER I.

T was really settled when Philip Meredith, who spent his summers on Carson's farm, fell out of the hayloft as a result of playing circus acrobat, and Lois Carson jumped down in time to catch the heavy body and break the fall.

The rest of the circus performers and the audience gathered in a frightened little group, while Lois fanned his white face and patted the tangled black curls.

"You better get Aunt Martha," she told Joe Winter, who was ringmaster, "and tell her to bring—things." The quiet way in which she said it made Joe wonder if she knew that Philip was unconscious.

"Lois, suppose he's dead?" asked Sarah Squire, her broken riding whip and gay scarf dragging beside her as she edged toward the victim.

"He is not dead," Lois answered, in the same steady tone, her grave, gray eyes filled with tears. "He's breathing, but he may be very sick."

Two-year-old Carl Winter, awed by

the silence and the stopping of the frolic, suddenly found his voice, and roared. Lois looked at him disapprovingly.

"Take him away, Jenny," she said to another little girl. "He might disturb Philip."

In another moment Aunt Martha had "skinned" the fence, cut across the short lot, and reached the barn. Her thin face worked nervously as she drew Philip out of the child's arms and began reviving him.

"Circus!" she was heard to murmur. "Tommyrot! It'll teach 'em—maybe."

A pathetic circle of children stood back, watching the boy's dark eyes open in bewilderment. He looked up at the woman, and smiled his usual magnetic smile that made it impossible to scold.

"I'm all right," he stammered. "Lois saved me."

"Yes, he's all right, auntie," supplemented Lois, coming forward. "You see, all he needed was for some one to catch him."

Her aunt looked at her sharply. "Lois Carson, come here to me," she said briefly. "Hold out your arm."

The small, blue calico sleeve hung

limply by her side. A trickle of blood was visible.

"It doesn't hurt," she said pleadingly. "Really, auntie, it doesn't hurt."

At the sight of blood the children broke into sobbing, and Philip sat up, frowning at the restraining hands.

"You hurt yourself?" he said softly. "Lois—did I come down that hard?"

"It doesn't hurt," she faltered again.

"It——" A limp heap of blue calico and two light-brown pigtailed tied with huge red bows lay at his feet.

After the bone was set and Lois stopped raving about saving Philip, her aunt told a neighbor that if Lois had not caught the boy he would have fractured his skull.

"To think of that mite saving him!" said the farm woman admiringly. "She always set a great deal by Phil Meredith, didn't she?"

"Yes, she did," admitted Aunt Martha grudgingly. "A sight more than he set by her, I think. They were babies together. Her mother and father dying at the same time his mother and father did, and all of 'em having been children together—it all makes Lois and Philip seem close together. Only Philip's uncle has money, and Lois has a fourth share of the farm—if the rocks don't choke up the little good there is in it. Philip's uncle has him in New York all winter, and Lois stays here. There ain't much here to help educate a girl. But Lois is smart; only she's quiet. She can't show what she knows. I want her to be a teacher when she's through school."

"They say Philip's uncle is going to send him to college, and maybe to Europe. It'd be a fine thing for Lois." The farm woman looked meaningly into Aunt Martha's rugged face.

"It'd be a bad thing," she answered promptly. "It'd be the story of the barn all over again. Lois would break every fall for him. I've watched Philip Meredith since he was six months old. He's spent every vacation here in the summer since his uncle's had him. And I knew his folks when they were children. No, Mis' Sumner, it'd be bad all the way round."

"But she sets a great deal by him," the other woman persisted. "And when a girl does that, other things don't matter."

Meantime, Philip had crept into the best room, where Lois lay in state, her thin, oval face looking worn as she slept restlessly. The long braids of hair were thrown over the pillow; they seemed to accentuate the sharp, tiny features.

"Lois," said Philip softly, touching her well arm.

She opened the solemn gray eyes to smile at him.

"What?" she whispered.

"Lois, when we grow up, let's get married!" the boy went on eagerly. "You saved my life—did you know it?"

A rosy flush spread over the little girl's face.

"Philip, are you going to marry me just because I saved your life, or——"

"Or why?" he insisted curiously.

"Or because." She shut the delicately molded lips with a delightful mysteriousness.

"Because why?" he demanded, attracted by the mystery.

The dark lashes covered the gray eyes as she turned her head away to murmur:

"Or because you do what they do in grown-up books—love me—you know——" Her embarrassment was amusing.

"Oh!" The boy's full, red mouth twisted itself thoughtfully. He looked at the little face, the solemn eyes, the dull braids of hair. Then the arm in its white sling made something inside his sluggish young heart beat quickly. So he bent over the bed to whisper convincingly: "Because I love you. But it was saving my life that made me know it. See?"

Tears sprang into the gray eyes, and the mouth quivered.

"Lois, you ain't crying! You ain't mad because I said—that?"

She shook her head.

"It isn't that, Philip; it's because I wanted you to love me without—without my having to do things to make you——" And she choked down the

sobs bravely, unconscious of her platitude.

"But I—I do love you!" he protested, with masculine misunderstanding. "I only fooled with Jenny and Sarah. And we'll go traveling with a real circus, and live on peanuts and taffy, Lois, and you can ride all day on a big, white horse, and I'll be beside you, so I can catch you. You ain't crying any more?" he added eagerly.

The gray eyes smiled back at him.

"We'll catch each other," she said drowsily, her well hand reaching out to grasp his.

And so their future was decided.

Some years later a slender girl of twenty-four walked down a country road. Her heavy brown hair was piled carelessly on top of her head, and as she turned over the sheets of the letter which she was reading, a flash of amusement was visible in the great, gray eyes. At the closing paragraphs, she leaned her head back to laugh out loud:

I don't know just how you'll like New York, Lois, it's an awful hodgepodge of cafés, poor people, kitchenet apartments that have rheumatic drains, subways, splendid shops, tall buildings, indigestible suppers, success, failure, tragedy, and multitudes of people gaping in at it all. We'll have to have a semibohemian sort of place, dear, because I'm not at all domesticated. You'll have to learn what bohemia is and learn to love and understand it. I've a raft of queer, dear people to meet you—men and women who have cast their fortunes with New York, and are watching them float or sink.

I can't quite place you in the atmosphere, Lois, although I've thought about it without end. Somehow your solemn, puritanical eyes and that subtle, silent mouth that says more by a single twitch than all the rest of us do in an evening—and your simple, almost severe coiffure—Lois, help! I've lost the gist of the sentence, imagine trying to parse it. First I begin by telling you you won't like New York, and then I run away with my pen trying to describe you to your own small self. Forgive me, sweetheart.

I meant to tell you that you were so different from the New York I have known, so much more true and worth while, that I hesitate before bringing you here; I dread to think of your losing one jot of your innocent belief in things. I'm jealous of the novelty the big city will have for you—understand? As in the days of our circus career, I want you to ride close beside me. Always.

Until Monday, dear,

PHILIP.

The gray eyes deepened to a happy blue as she slipped the letter back in its envelope.

"Until Monday!" So much was to happen after then.

"Even, Lois!" said a woman's voice, and, looking up, Lois Carson saw Agnes Ryerson's black buggy standing by the roadside.

"Hullo, Mrs. Ryerson!" she said quickly.

"I hear you're going to git married to Phil Meredith, and live down in New York," the old woman demanded, shaking her head. "That's a big change for you, isn't it?"

"I don't mind," the girl answered, smiling. "You see, Philip and I have been brought up together—and we've been engaged for a long time."

"That's so," the other admitted reflectively. "You've been promised to him since you was eighteen. I hear his uncle lost money before he died—that Philip is drawing pictures for a living?"

Again the quick smile.

"Yes, he is, Mrs. Ryerson. He's done very well for so young an artist."

"You don't think you'll be lonesome for home, Lois?" The old woman's bleared eyes peered into her face curiously.

"I'm to come back whenever I want to," she told her. "It wouldn't seem like living unless I had the farm, too. But I don't mind giving up school. I never really liked it."

"It ain't a bad thing to do—until a girl marries. It's easier than working out. Good-by, Lois. I've got to be moving. Come over if you git time before."

"I'm afraid I won't, Mrs. Ryerson. I'm to be married at Deerfield on Monday, and then we're going straight to New York. I've never been there before."

"They say it's a good place to keep clear of," the old woman remarked solemnly. "But maybe it's all right when a girl is married. Good-by, Lois Carson! Good luck—you deserve it."

Lois watched the buggy until it turned to the left. Then she cut across the lot into the pasture field. It was a short

road home, and she needed every last moment even for her simple preparations. Pausing as she opened the gate, she thought quickly of the past years, of the simple, happy girlhood spent on the farm, of the years of teaching school, of the blessed summers when Philip came back from the city to rusticate, of the talks and walks and drives they had had, of his masterful, adorable manner of making her love him just as she had done when a child, of hearing him tell of the artist life in New York, of his hopes and fears, of the frightful competition which beset any new man in the field. Then followed long, lonesome winters, endured only by the letters from New York, sometimes short, sometimes long, always written with a spirited dash that caused a stir in the girl's peaceful life.

Then the blessed time, six years ago, when he told her he wanted her for his wife, begged her to say yes in an ardent, boyish fashion that made her answer "Wait." Wait and be sure that it was not propinquity and youthful impulse which blinded the boy's real self. To which he had protested humorously, accusing her of secret loves and hidden romances, of base breaking of child engagements. Then he kissed her. And Lois questioned no further.

As the years slipped by—one, two, three, four, five, six—she tried, in the feeble, ineffectual way women have taught each other to adopt, to tell Philip that her aunt wished the marriage to take place, that Deerfield whispered warnings over long engagements, that she, too, felt a stir of impatience as each year brought only the fascinating letters, the summer visit, the Christmas box. Again she wondered if the boy-and-girl affair proved a millstone for the struggling artist, of whose real life she knew so little. But, womanlike, she basked in the memory of that first June-day kiss, and let the words remain unspoken.

Then Philip wrote her definitely, named their wedding day in a peremptory manner, told her with masculine superiority that there was no need to wait longer. And Lois, half ques-

tioning the impulse that prompted the letter, answered shyly that she would be ready.

As she leaned over the rickety gate, visualizing, with blissful ignorance, New York and New York life, she began to dread meeting her husband's friends. With a new shyness, she wondered if they would be at his home often. How many best friends did he claim? The fact of any woman artists had not occurred to her. She laughed at Philip when he had written her they could afford but one maid the first year—as if the work in an apartment, as he called it, would be anything unusual. She longed to see her home, to be able to work in it, to make it comfortable and attractive for Philip.

The creation of a home! The bearing and rearing of children, being the helpmate, the comrade, of the man whose name she bore; unconsciously sinking her own individuality and virility into the stronger partner's personality, shaping his success with the actual toil of her hands, if necessary; comprehending, believing, and loving him until the last moment of their union be ended. This was Lois' creed, her ideal of married life.

CHAPTER II.

The wedding at the Deerfield parsonage was as simple an affair as even a New England town could boast of. It consisted of Philip's stumbling over the responses to the Episcopalian ring service, which he had wished read, and of Lois' taking her vows in a steady, low-pitched voice which made Philip's groping tenor sound all the more wavering. There was Aunt Martha and her cousins—Lyman and Richard—who stood sheepishly by, uncomfortable in the new suits of gray and the starched collars. Sarah Winter, a schoolgirl chum, stood up with Lois, and giggled confusedly when it came time for her to take off the bride's glove.

Aunt Martha, resplendent in black silk, with jet trimmings, sat by the door of the pastor's study, and watched with moist eyes and disapproving lips her

niece sign her name Lois Carson for the last time. Something about the slim, gray-suited figure, with its rough felt traveling toque and simple white blouse, made Aunt Martha's vision strangely shortsighted.

After the minister went through his usual parliamentary proceedings in the way of congratulations, and the boys kissed her shyly on the cheek, Sarah Winter leaned toward Philip, immaculate in an imported tweed, to whisper: "Kiss your wife, Mr. Meredith."

Then Lois looked up at him with a strange, wistful smile, half timid, half inviting, and Philip leaned down in masterful fashion to take her first wife's embrace.

They did not stop for the customary coffee-and-cake repast, or to call on the old friends. The train for New York was due in eight minutes—Philip had timed the whole affair—so they rushed to the station as fast as the pair of bays could take them, saying a hasty, rather unsatisfactory, farewell.

The train steamed in on time, and Philip helped his wife into the Pullman coach, both standing on the platform to wave handkerchiefs at the forlorn little group left behind. When Aunt Martha's tall figure became a microscopic speck, and Sarah Winter's red-feathered hat looked like a much berouged mosquito, Lois turned to go inside.

"Thank Heaven, that's done!" sighed Philip, as the train jostled them closely together.

"Did you mind it so much?" she asked quietly. "It only took you six hours and thirty minutes, Philip—not counting the trip up and back."

He laughed easily.

"It was worth it, of course, only the whole thing was so threadbare, so—barren, so absolutely ugly. You understand, dear, it lacked color and atmosphere and romance. Take the same thing in a studio, and it would have been delightful."

Lois dropped her eyes as she answered:

"I suppose beauty is essential to you, isn't it, Philip? You always shrank

from seeing uncle butcher, or any of the other homely, practical sights that a farm affords. I can remember your screaming when you happened in on a dying horse. That is the artist in you, I think. But to me the old parsonage, and the farm, and all the 'threadbare sights' are beautiful because they are so real. It is wonderful to think we can go back there at any time and find them unchanged—have you ever thought of that?"

"Can't say that I have," he told her, in semiseriousness. "But I'll try desperately hard to reform. Meantime, I am in the act of brutally transplanting a New England *rara flora* to dangerous, quicksand New York, where the whole garden may change in a single night. Do you think you'll take root, Lois?"

"I'll try," she promised, smiling; after which they forgot all else except themselves, that the boy-and-girl romance had deepened into the ever wonderful union of man and wife, that Lois Carson, New England schoolmarm, was no longer in existence—she was the wife of Philip Meredith, artist. And Philip Meredith, vagabond, bohemian, whose tastes always squabbled with his pocketbook, was a married man, who must work and plan and provide for two. So they thought and talked as the train bolted toward New York.

It was after eight when they were in the last block before the Grand Central, and for the first time, Lois, whose practicability had denied them any honeymoon, asked if they were to be met at the train.

"No; but the bunch will be at the flat, I suppose. I left the key with Eleanor."

"Eleanor?"

"Yes, Eleanor Ralph—haven't I mentioned her to you before? She's a singer—contralto—and unusual to her finger tips. She is one of our set, Lois. You'll like her from the start."

"How many are there in your set?"

"About seven or eight—never counted 'em. You see, they consider marriage the one unreasonable, unaccountable happening, a veritable calamity befalling one of their number. They

really didn't want to welcome you at first, dear, until they saw I was determined to make the plunge."

The passengers were crowding out of the aisles; Lois stood up, and waited for Philip to go ahead. Within ten minutes they had left the train and attended to the baggage. The people jostled in and out of the huge waiting room, confusing the girl, who clung to her husband's arm as he strode about giving orders. Another moment, and they climbed into a taxi.

In the semidarkness, Philip put his arm about her, and whispered: "We're going home, Lois!"

Without speaking, she reached up to kiss him softly on the lips. Then the cab reared off into the lighted street, and, ashamed of her little emotion, she sat upright, trying to see on both sides of the street at once as Philip pointed out buildings.

It seemed only a moment before they turned down a steep side street, and stopped. Looking up at the red-and-white brick building before her, Lois saw that it was many stories high, and that nearly every window was lighted. Inside the iron grilled door stood a colored boy in uniform, who smiled benevolently on them as they passed in. Another colored boy shut the elevator door patronizingly, and mumbled congratulations to Philip.

"What floor are we on?" she asked, as they passed the ninth.

"Twelfth. I've nailed the best suite in the building. My studio is in the east corner—"

The car stopped, and Lois found herself walking down a velvety-carpeted hall, conscious that the elevator boy's eyes followed her critically.

Outside a cherry-and-brass trimmed door, where a card plate read "Philip Meredith—Studio," they paused while Philip fumbled in his pocket for a key. Inside, Lois could hear the fast drumming of a piano and the sound of men and women laughing and talking together.

"They—are there," she said slowly, as he drew out the key.

"Bless their old hearts!" he answered

lightly. "You can always count on them—every chap there."

Lois drew in her under lip. She could not have told why, yet as she stood on the threshold of her new home she experienced a sensation of dread and doubt, an inability to meet and cope with these associates of Philip. She wished she might have come to her home alone in the first chapter of their married life, to have had these same people come to her one by one until she accustomed herself to their viewpoint.

The little door swung back, and a discordant crash of the piano, together with a chorus of high-pitched voices, greeted their ears. There was a rush into the tiny entry, and Lois found herself dragged into the living room, to be turned around and hugged and kissed by both men and women. She was trying to extricate herself from some one's grasp when she caught a glimpse of Philip, his head resting on a tall, thin woman's neck while she patted his head audaciously.

"Hello, Phil!"

"Oh, you Life Sentence!"

"Mrs. Meredith, we want to see you alone—we want to warn you—"

"Phil, you old sport, so you've gone and done it—"

"Did you promise to obey, Mrs. Meredith? Very foolish—very!"

"Lunch is all ready, Phil. Hungry, boy?"

"Take off Mrs. Meredith's coat, Van. Don't you see we're bothering her?"

It was the tall, thin woman who spoke. Lois gave her a grateful look, her eyes taking in the burned-amber evening gown that fitted the thin figure tightly, and which matched the red-gold hair and the tawny, velvety eyes.

"Try to behave," laughed Philip, slipping off his raincoat and putting Lois in an easy-chair. "You're an unruly gang, the whole outfit. Remember, you must be on your best behavior. Now, then, line up and let me introduce you. Lois looks like a frightened elf, huddled in that cage. First of all—Eleanor Ralph, Lois. I told you about her on the train."

The tall woman glided forward, a sparkle of amusement in her brown eyes. She took Lois' stiffly extended hand gracefully.

"My dear, I'm more than glad. We all love Philip, and we're going to do the same to you. Please return the compliment—and forget our bad manners."

The others had formed in a semicircle around Lois, laughing and talking in an undertone.

"This is Patsy," Philip said, drawing a short, rather plump girl away from some one's arm. "Patsy Wood. She can model as fast as you can think, Lois, only she's young, and it'd spoil her to have big success for a little while. Patsy, dear, this is Lois, the person who said she'd marry me at the age of ten."

Patsy Wood bent down to give her a bearish little hug. Her round, pink face, with its wistful blue eyes and black, straight hair, attracted Lois, and she wished she might have been alone with Patsy before the others had descended upon them.

"Now, please!" begged a strange-looking man, whose slim white wrists were encircled with odd Oriental bracelets, and whose shirt and tie were of pale-pink silk. His yellow-white hair was elaborately waved, and the red, pouting lips and prominent, mouse-colored eyes seemed to call attention to the fact of his comical pug nose and sloping forehead.

"Please what, Fay?" asked Philip good-naturedly.

"Please take me next. I'm as feminine as possible this evening. Had my soul all massaged for your wife's benefit, and my ora is that of a genuine Yogi."

"Tell Fay Forrest that he needs watching," Lois heard her husband say indulgently. "He's only good for an extra when some one else has disappointed. You might shake hands with him, and let him have a tenth part of your second-rate smile."

Again Lois let her hand be shaken heartily, and another torrent of pain-

fully smart words was directed toward her.

"Carl Van Duss," commanded Philip. "Here's another chap we take pity on—that's right, Van, embrace my wife."

Lois stood up as the plump man in a bright-blue suit bent over to kiss her.

"Please!" she murmured protestingly.

Then the room rang with laughter, and Lois submitted, blushing furiously, and wishing she might rush back to Deerfield and collect her thoughts.

"Last, but never—" began Van, trying to push a tall, silent man forward; but the man himself interrupted by holding out a large, muscular hand and grasping Lois' cold fingers firmly.

"I'll spare your husband the details," he said, in a rich, deep voice that made Lois forget her embarrassment as she stared at the bronzed, scarred face, with its quizzical, twinkling black eyes. "I'm Dick Spaulding, paint splatterer at large, master magician, and chief of the kitchen detail. I'm ashamed of this crowd. For an organized society, they are without doubt the most disgraceful, absolutely useless set of humans ever treading the subway paths to everlasting progress. But we mean it in the right way, Mrs. Meredith. Welcome home!"

A burst of applause followed, and Patsy Wood jumped on top of a low tea table, and began a Spanish fandango with the aid of a red scarf and a battered tambourine. Fay Forrest rushed to the piano and banged out a discordant accompaniment, while Van Duss and Eleanor Ralph waltzed wildly about the room, steering clear of the furniture. Philip stood by, watching them with happy eyes. He glanced at Lois' solemn face with a faint hint of annoyance, and after the dance was brought to a close by Patsy's losing balance and falling into Fay Forrest's arms, he suggested that they eat supper.

"Take Lois into her room, will you, Eleanor?" he asked. "You know, I think you were both trumps to work over the place like this—don't you, Lois?"

"It has been very kind," she said, her lips trembling from nervousness.

"We didn't know your special color, so we made it white," Patsy Wood told her, as she turned on the light.

Lois looked at the dainty enameled room, with its colonial dressing table and chairs, the miniature four-poster, the oval picture frames, the soft sash curtains tied with white satin, the cushions on the little window seat, and the fluffy cream rugs. Her look of genuine admiration pleased the two women.

"Do you like it, dear?" asked Eleanor, exchanging glances with Patsy.

"It is too beautiful," Lois said, fondly touching the nearest window curtain with her hand. "It is lovely—and you did it all for me?"

"It was horribly expensive," answered Patsy Wood, as she fluffed up her hair before the mirror. "We fairly browbeat the shop people. You see, Philip gave us so much, and we had to make it do. Beastly of him, wasn't it? Eleanor almost refused to speak to him because of one little rug she wanted—a white thing, with silk edges."

"Oh, there couldn't be anything more beautiful!" Lois repeated, in the same rapt tone. "There couldn't be!"

"Then take off your things, and slip into a tea gown—we won't mind. You must feel stuffy in a blouse and skirt."

Eleanor smiled discreetly as she looked at the white waist which Lois had made and fitted herself.

"I haven't a tea gown," she said haltingly. "You see—I——"

"Of course she didn't get clothes in—Deerfield. Why, certainly not!" Patsy Wood kicked Eleanor brutally as she spoke. "What a little idiot to think of such a thing! When I go any place outside of New York I almost take to Mother Hubbard things rather than wear good gowns. We'll doll you out in due time, infant, anyway. Please—please let me fluff this one bit of hair—there—it looked so repentant, so absolutely puritanical. Eleanor, she has nice eyes and skin, hasn't she?"

"Try to excuse this rude girl's manner of speaking," Eleanor had seated herself on the foot of the white bed, and was leaning her head on the rail, her red-brown curls resting snugly on

the shoulder of the amber gown. "She always discusses people just as if they were not present. The only way to cure her is to do likewise. Now, Patsy, don't sniff! You are abominably rude at times. I think Mrs. Meredith is rather shocked all the way round, only she's too game to admit it. I don't blame her. We must be a frightful bunch to buck into. Imagine if Tony had been here!"

Lois had been laying out her simple toilet articles on the white, crisp dressing-table scarf. She was wondering if the edges were worked by hand.

"Who is 'Tony'?" she asked, trying to appear at ease.

An awkward little pause followed, during which Eleanor turned her head away, so that Lois could not see the expression on her face. Patsy Wood opened the bedroom door, and called:

"We are coming in a minute, people. You can serve the cocktails."

Then she said carelessly:

"Tony is an artist we all know. She had a good deal of ability Philip thought at one time."

"A girl?"

"Yes," Eleanor took up the strain. "Her name is Antoinette Chevalier; she was born in Paris, but her parents died when she was a tiny child. An old aunt brought her to New York, where she scrambled along something after the manner of weeds. But she did good work before she was so very—well, lazy."

"Why hasn't she come here?" persisted Lois, facing the two women.

"My dear, I really don't know. She probably has a raft of engagements. And, then, Tony is the sort that drops in unexpectedly after she declares she can't stir an inch of the way. The men are calling, aren't they, Patsy? Let's prevent Fay Forrest from breaking in here. I'm going to call you, Lois—do you mind? It seems more homelike. Come on; your apartment isn't so big that you'll be lost in it. Poor Phil! If he only hadn't built such expectations on being one of the idle rich! It's made him frightfully extravagant. But he's a dear boy, and we all expect big things

of him. No, the turn is here. Your maid, Cora, comes in the morning. Do you mind housework? I hate it! Oh, then it's a very happy proceeding. You have known Philip for years, haven't you? How lovely! I think Patsy stayed behind to pet that one lovelock of hers. Here we are!"

They were in the dining room—a low-raftered place, filled with mahogany furniture and odd silver and pewter pieces. At the first glance, Lois could not decide whether she liked it or not. The center of the table was a mass of bride roses and ferns, and the table was set with dainty china of a delicate blue-and-gold pattern. The four men were waiting beside their places.

"Hail to the bride!" they chanted, and while Eleanor Ralph made a low, mocking bow, Lois slid into the place beside Philip, and smiled up at him.

Presently Patsy Wood flew down the hall into her place beside Dick Spaulding. Then Fay Forrest began popping corks, and Lois took her initial sip of champagne amid dire warnings and mock sighs of regret. While the cold meats and salads disappeared quickly, a babble of tongues was at large. Evidently Philip had been honor guest at a farewell bachelor's spread only two evenings before, and Lois was informed of the conduct and sad spirits of the bridegroom. Fresh scandal, gossip about players and artists of renown, news of a new opera, a stolen art gem, a change in the editorial department of a magazine, a hint at one of their set losing money on the horses, the exclusive announcement of a model's marrying a millionaire baby, the discussion of Buddhism versus mental science, the heated argument over which shade of blue was to be most worn, whether Tommy Ran would make his mark in the English music halls, and the ultra-importance attached to the change in the waistline—one topic after another was tossed from hand to hand, disposed of in light-hearted fashion, and the next conversational morsel greedily snatched at before the period had been placed after the last.

Through it all, Lois sat with beat-

ing heart and weary, confused eyes, trying to follow the tangled thread of logic that ran throughout the dialogue, glancing now and then at Philip, alert, smiling, at his ease, adding a bonmot now and then. This was to be her home, her environment, her companions. This was the great change she had looked forward to—these bewildering, quite perplexing people, who seemed to laugh at the world and its ways, laugh with hollow eyes and parched lips, as if they had once tried to look seriously upon all problems and had been baffled.

By and by the topics flagged, and the men began to smoke. Eleanor Ralph pulled out her cigarette case, and passed it to Lois.

"I didn't think you did," she said, as the other shook her head. "It's a bad thing to be pals with; don't start it. Some day my throat will rebel, and I'll have to fight it out. Until then—" A slender puff of blue smoke was the answer.

Patsy Wood rolled her own cigarettes, taking the tobacco from a quaint leather pouch which she told Lois came from Persia. None of the men seemed to wonder at the fact, although Philip tried to shield his wife's embarrassed disapproval.

"This has been a roofoo party," said Patsy, after her fourth cigarette. "And now we are all going home. I've got a model coming in the morning—a perfect find. He operated the arm exercisers in the window of some athletic store, and he's going to be a positive jewel. I'll have him in the figure later on, if he suits."

"What are you doing now, Pat?" asked Dick Spaulding.

"Bas-relief illustrations—good stuff, at that. Come over and look at my specimen."

"Thanks; I may lure him from you."

The ringing of the bell startled them.

"Now, who on earth is banging around at this hour?" asked Dick Spaulding. "Shall I answer, Phil?"

"Please. Telegrams, or more of your tricks—"

Eleanor Ralph glanced at Patsy.

"It might be—Tony," she murmured. "She said if it wasn't too late——"

Philip strode down the hall. In the living room stood a woman, scarcely more than a girl, who held out her hand to him gracefully.

"Welcome home, pal!" she said, a trifle bitterly. "And many, many good wishes."

"Thank you, Tony," Philip answered, the color flooding his cheeks. "Thank you for coming in—we missed you."

The woman's eyes half closed, and then she smiled brightly.

"Are all the rest here?" she asked. "I heard Fay's voice from the outside."

"Yes; I'll bring them in," Philip added hastily. "Just a minute——"

"We'd better go in," Patsy Wood was telling Lois. "That is Tony. She is the—the girl we told you about to-night. She was at the theater, but she said she'd stop if she wasn't bagged for a supper."

A strange silence came over the others as they filed down the hall.

"Funny business," muttered Van Duss to Fay Forrest. "Did you think it?"

"Of Tony? Yes," answered Fay.

When Lois looked at Tony wistfully, the latter could not refrain from an ugly little laugh, which she checked between her teeth until it sounded like a mischievous gurgle. Then she did the usual act of kissing her on the left cheek and saying the polite, proper phrases. Lois, who smiled coldly, tried to answer, and the other woman, whose fluffy, heavy, yellow curls were dressed low on her forehead, so as to accentuate the bright-brown eyes, smiled back at her mockingly, and kept on saying conventional commonplaces in a sardonic, easy fashion hard to define.

Then she looked at the men.

"So you all came to help the good cause along?" she asked, showing two even rows of white teeth when she smiled. "Now, I call that square. Phil, dear, you look so staid and respectable I shouldn't have known you. Does Deerfield ever see any other vagabonds, Mrs. Meredith? When we knew each

other, a few years ago, he used to be called King of the Night——"

"Tony, did you know Rex Kessler was in town? He took lunch with the Baynard girls yesterday."

Patsy Wood edged up beside her, and began turning down a rim of the lace coat collar.

"No, I didn't," she answered carelessly. "I'm not interested in Rex any longer. He's monotonous with his goodness. Next thing you know, he'll be going in for charities and things like that. He might even invite matrimony. I'm going, people. I'm coming to call soon, Mrs. Meredith. Don't let New York frighten you—or Philip, either. Good night, Phil. I'll let you know about the new crayons. Personally I haven't a grain of faith in any of Bartell's things. He's grubby all the way through. Better come with me—hurry up, Eleanor; you might as well be taken home in state. Pat, are you going with Dick? I thought so. Very platonic, very. Van and Fay usually roll downtown about this hour, and begin to take notice."

A scurry for wraps followed. Patsy Wood slipped into the kitchen, and dragged out her modeling aprons, with which she had protected their gowns from the supper preparations. Fay Forrest buttoned an elaborate, pale-gray overcoat, and fondled his pearl-headed cane.

"Are we ready?" shouted Richard Spaulding. "Now, then, forward—march! Don't wash the dishes, will you, Phil? We have a perfect gem coming in the morning. Good-by, Mrs. Meredith. See you soon."

"Good night, people," said Phil warmly, standing in the doorway, with his arm around Lois. "We thank you with all our hearts for what you've done. Come over soon and often."

"Good night!"

"Adios!"

"We'll be back soon, don't worry!"

As the last chorus of farewells floated back to them, Lois leaned her head on Phil's shoulder, and let the tears come unchecked.

"I'm stupid," she whispered. "I'm

stupid and foolish—didn't do credit to you to-night. Somehow I couldn't find myself. It was so dazzling, so different, so very, very much harder than I ever thought things would be. Don't think I didn't want to appear as you would care to have me."

He shut the door, and drew her inside tenderly.

"Lois, you're just a tired child," he said gently. "You mustn't bother your head about a crowd of eccentric, warm-hearted people who never lived the life of a New England country girl. They couldn't have qualified in Deerfield, either."

Lois lifted her head to smile through her tears.

"But, Phil," she answered quickly, "the thing that bothered all evening, that kept asking itself over and over again, and refusing not to be answered, is: 'Why did Philip ever marry you? Why did he marry *you*, when all these women understand his work, and have been so much nearer?' That is what bothered me; that is what I cannot understand."

"Can't you, Lois?" he asked. "Think of—"

"Is it——" She hesitated, her cheeks paling with excitement. "Is it—because you love me—so much?"

"Just that," he told her.

"Then nothing else matters, does it?" she whispered, coming close to him.

"Nothing—much," he answered, a swift vision of Tony Chevalier's mocking eyes and brilliant smile flashing across his consciousness.

CHAPTER III.

Patsy Wood viewed with expectant eyes the huge barrel which was to be filled with clay—three hundred pounds she bargained for with the art dealer. The timid delivery man patiently dumped it outside the door, and hoisted the barrel up the six flights of stairs—Patsy's studio affording no elevator. Then he appeared before Patsy, repentant and ashamed, to ask for a bucket with which to bring up his first installment.

"Haven't such a thing," she said cheerfully. "You can use your hat, or something like that. I'm busy. Your trade is to deliver clay, and mine is to make use of the delivery."

Only the twinkle in her eyes saved the perplexed driver from fleeing to the near-by saloon.

After which she banged the rickety studio door shut, and began to scrape her tools carefully. The model had sent word he could not come until next week, which was just as well for Patsy, seeing that she would have to tip the delivery man decently after his perilous ascent with the clay.

"Good morning," said Eleanor Ralph, opening the door to smile at the tousled vision in the blue gingham pinafore. "Now, who would have thought it?"

"Thought what?" Patsy nodded curtly, and went on scraping.

"That you'd have recovered from the bridal fray—wasn't it tizzy? Now, on your honor as a bohemian, did you ever?"

"Ever what?"

"Ever suspect that the bride was going to prove such a composite Evangeline and Dickens' Dora, and—well, I can't think of anything else. Last night opinions were refrained from, seeing that we were all together, and that Tony was along. But now—between our scarred, honest old selves—did you ever?"

"No," said Patsy slowly, stopping her work to look out at the telegraph poles and the murky autumn sky. "No—I never did. But I don't think she is any Dickens' Dora. I wouldn't gamble either way on the Evangeline. I think, Eleanor, she is a house-and-garden woman."

"Translate, Pat."

"It can't all be told in a sentence. I mean that up to now she has been a nice, fresh little girl who has led an extremely limited existence, the only thing red-blooded in it being her love for Philip—and she doesn't know him. She has seen him summers, when he was tired and placid and easily suited; and she knew him as a child, which is sure to blind. The whole affair has

been a boy-and-girl romance which couldn't end any other way without being awkward. That is my candid opinion."

"You mean," said Eleanor cautiously, "that Phil felt he ought to marry her, instead of being frank as to his feeling?"

"Perhaps. Perhaps neither recognized that statement. Certainly she has not. I've known Philip since he's been in the paint game, and he's been mighty white to me. But I'd put a good deal of ready money on the fact that he never realized how different Lois is from the world to which he is accustomed."

"Please go on—about the girl's character; I'm interested. Remember, Philip has been good to me, too. There isn't a bigger-hearted boy in town."

"As to her character? I believe that she is going to develop wonderfully in the next few months. She is going to come into her own—wait and see. There's a world of forepassed energy in that chin, and her forehead shows the thinker. She's a stubborn little thing, too. But I liked her eyes. Of course, it's all funny, just as a vaudeville skit would be—her clothes, her manners, her extreme disapproval of us. But it's pathetic, too. And I don't think Philip would be any too patient."

"Don't you? I think he seemed quite infatuated."

"I don't. I think he's been horribly discontented with himself of late. His work has slumped badly. I think he has realized he needed a firmer hand on the lines, and that marriage would prove the anchor."

"Do you think the thing will last—that it can last?"

"No, I don't," admitted Patsy. "Unless she rises to the occasion better than I ever knew a woman to do before. Artists aren't meant to be house-and-garden men, and they won't adapt themselves to anything in God's world except a new color scheme."

"It's a threadbare question, isn't it?" Eleanor mused, leaning against the door. "Whether marriage interferes with a career?"

The other girl's cheeks went suddenly

white, and her voice was choked as she answered:

"I spout lots of nonsense, Eleanor, but this is quite true. Don't forget it. The man who hides behind the skirts of his career as a pretext for not marrying is matched only by the woman who drags forth her career as a deadlock against motherhood. Both may be simplified as meaning: 'I love mine own self before all else.'"

"Good-by, little Buddha!" said Eleanor briefly.

"Good-by," answered Patsy, in the same suppressed voice.

Going down the long, winding stairs, Eleanor held her smart walking skirt carefully above the dingy dust trails and heaps of partially collected rubbish.

"What a hole to exist in!" she sighed, reaching the massive old door. "Pat seems to thrive on it, though. Hullo!" she remarked out loud to Dick Spaulding, who was climbing the sagging stone steps. "Pat's home very much at home."

"I came to tell her good-by," laughed Spaulding, removing the soft felt hat. "You look blooming this morning, Eleanor. Off to sing on trial?"

"Yes; small fry, but it helps. We are all going to Fay Forrest's luncheon party on Friday. Don't forget, and run away."

"No danger. I'm booked for a New Jersey house party for three days; it might be worse. Will the Merediths be there?"

Spaulding watched Eleanor's mouth as she answered:

"Of course! Why not?"

"Nothing—only I thought we rather startled Mrs. Meredith, and —"

"Why don't you come right out with it, Dick?"

"What do you mean?"

"We all want the other's opinion about her. Isn't that the open truth? Pat and I started in pretty well. Pat thinks she is a house-and-garden woman."

"I think she's radically different from Philip," advanced Spaulding cautiously. "If she's a house-and-garden woman she'll want to scour his canvases and

put germicide on all the brushes. Imagine Philip having to read Boston magazines and keep regular hours!"

"I wonder what she thought of us?" Eleanor murmured, stepping down into the street. "She's a sort of Galatea, just awakened by Philip's love. You can't tell what she may develop into. You see, she's had the start of us by a perfectly untrammelled girlhood, while we—we all—are——"

Spaulding replaced his hat, and went inside the doorway.

"We," he finished lightly, "have been tripping it on the light fantastic ever since we can remember. Good luck to you! See you Friday."

In a minute or two Dick Spaulding stood laughing at Patsy's attempts to hasten her delivery man.

"You'll be buried in the ruins at this rate," he told her, "and I cannot talk to you with an honest steam stoker bursting in and out periodically. Send him away, please. I really want to talk to you."

"And banish my hopes and ambitions—there's as much as ninety-four pounds in the barrel now, Dick! You don't want to call quits as soon as that?"

"Have him rest a minute—tell him to get a cigar. Here, sport, don't hurry with the next load. I want to practice somersaults for an acrobatic act, and I must have the doorway."

The little man trudged out, holding the coin gingerly in his red palm.

"I think he believes we're lunatics with an indulgent family backing us," Patsy laughed, as she shut the door and faced Spaulding. "Now, what do you want to say, Dick? What's the last success?"

"Must it always be a success, Patsy? Can't a fellow ever have any other kind of luck?"

"Not your make-up," she told him boldly. "You know what my theory is concerning you—you passed through the adolescent stage of failure many years ago; you met all the handicaps and bitter, discouraging things which beset any artistic career at its starting point. And you managed to wriggle through them,

keeping your eye open for the main chance. You suffered, too, Dick. And you lived. Now, when you're blasé and cynical toward the rest of us beginners, you are having success after success, and I warrant you it doesn't taste any too sweet, does it?"

"Perhaps my digestion is poor," he suggested. "Go on."

"It's odd, isn't it, how success comes at the time when we tolerate rather than court it? The keen edge of our appetites has been ruined by subsisting on makeshifts, and the starved, anxious years when we craved recognition were dulled into submissive coma by bitter, distorted views of life and living. That is why I have always thought your success meant so little to you," she finished earnestly. "Now, please go away, and let my clay man come back."

She opened the studio door to call for the clay man; but he caught her arm, and held it fast.

"Wait a minute longer. I'm going to Jersey for a few days, and I won't see you again. Patsy, what's come up? You're not like yourself."

"Nothing," she answered breathlessly; "nothing much. Only I can't lose good time talking platitudes with a man whose career is a settled, satisfactory thing. I've got my own way to carve, Dick. Sometimes you seem to forget that."

"You won't take money, Pat. I've offered——"

"And you won't understand, will you, that I want to work, work, just as you must have worked and struggled once? You weren't always like this, Dick; you couldn't have been. You must have been eager and ambitious and filled with high ideals when you started your career. Every scar on your face, every flash of your eyes, could tell a story if you chose. And you won't be fair enough to understand that I, too, am hoping to win a name."

"Patricia," he said solemnly, "you will never succeed. You had better give up this child's play, and find a new pace. You haven't the power within to do such work as this. Place cards or water colors for upstate exhibitions——"

"Please!" she begged. "Dick, you can be nasty!"

"I can be truthful," he answered. "I can tell you brutal facts, the same as I was once told. I tell you, you cannot be a sculptor. You'll starve at it. What kind of a life is this? What sort of miserable existence? Look at me, and answer. Patsy, we've touched deep waters this morning, and I didn't mean to. On my honor, I've been rude. I apologize. But you will go bumping your willful little head against the rocks, and you won't let your best friend help you steer clear."

"Dick, I can't help you to understand any more—you're blind."

"I've always been pretty square with you, haven't I, Patsy? I've never made any bones about our friendship for one another. I don't love you. I don't think I should ever want to love again—it's bad business. But I like and admire you, and I want to help you as long as I may. It has seemed to me that if a man and woman enjoy each other's comradeship, there can be no harm in the acquaintance, provided both are equally frank with the other concerning the relationship. Don't you think I am right?"

"I think," she said suddenly, "that you are horribly, cruelly selfish. I know now how you won your success—by tramping over the hearts of people who loved you, by beating your way to the front, pushing back the weaker ones. That is why your success brings you no happiness. I wish you would go away now. I want to be alone to think it all out again."

"You are probably hungry," he told her, smiling. "I shan't remember anything you've said this morning."

"I shall." Her eyes were large and black-looking. "I shall go on fighting and trying to the end. Just because one man has played the cad——"

"The cad?" he interrupted jerkily. "What do you mean?"

"I mean that you've always been a 'brother' to me; you are the kind of man that spoils marriage for girls like myself. You make us love and believe and trust you, and you sink back into

the happy-go-easy pace of being a 'pal.' You show us every attention that a man is supposed to show the woman he makes his wife—under the guise of comradeship. You are seen with us everywhere, attentive to the last drop of the glove; every one couples your name with ours, and you smile and smirk with satisfaction. You have the pleasure and attention that a married man enjoys, with none of the responsibility and hardship. And when the girl has exhausted her charms for you, you tell her you have always been 'square' with her, that love interferes with a career. You are strangely blind to the wasted years in which you monopolized her girlhood, the years in which you greedily demanded every atom of fresh youth. You don't know the meaning of honest love, Dick. You have never had the exquisite torture of caring for some one beside yourself. Forgive me if I am bitter. But it is the time and generation when women must speak for themselves. The chivalrous age when men spoke for them has passed. It is the 'brother man' who needs to be reckoned with; it is he who prevents sensible, necessary marriages, where there will be little children and sane living, instead of lonesomeness and wrecked nerves. I know what I'm saying, Dick. It's not hunger——"

"I suppose," said Spaulding, his upper lip curling, "that you would advocate a marriage with such a woman as Philip Meredith's wife—the culmination of a childish fancy? A house-and-garden woman, to sit opposite your table at eight-fifteen sharp every day in the year?"

"It is the assured calm of that house-and-garden woman that has brought this to the surface," Patsy went on quickly. "It is her wonderfully feminine make-up, rare in our set, which attracts. We may laugh at the cut of her waist and her coiffure, but we are silent when we see her absolute dependence on her husband, her assumed, taken-for-granted attitude that he will protect and cherish her. We have spoiled you men. We have petted and flattered and given in to you. We have lost our hold. It is

our fault, the modern woman's fault—not yours."

"Damn!" said Spaulding emphatically, opening the door. "I'm going to Jersey until Friday. When I see you at Fay's luncheon, I hope the tirade will have subsided. If you take your first lesson of Mrs. Lois in eighteen-sixty deportment, give her my best. I'll send flowers instead of calling. You might have slated me as the horrible example."

The door shut abruptly, and Patsy stood staring at its dirty, notched back.

CHAPTER IV.

Lois watched with a sense of curious respect her trim, white-capped maid serve coffee and rolls. She told Philip shyly that she ought to see about the kitchen work before she settled down to talk.

"Nonsense!" he commanded. "This is a great feast day, Lois. We are supposed to keep up a firework display with skyrockets and the rest of the celebration stunts for a couple of months at least. You didn't think I expected you to turn in and get the washing out by seven o'clock, did you?"

A tiny brass clock chimed eleven impudently, and Lois, wrapped in a red silk lounging robe of Philip's, and cuddled in an easy-chair, smiled as they counted the strokes.

"But we mustn't be as late as this all the time," she protested. "Why, how in the world will you ever get any work done?"

"Sometimes I go a month at a stretch without doing a stroke. A fellow can't come into his studio on a time clock, Lois. This isn't quite the same as nature faking with a ledger and an adding machine. It's sort of inspirational, fit-and-start work, that gets done when it won't stop begging any longer."

"But I should think regular hours and early——"

"Lois, you are a treat! My dear girl, if you knew the way artists in New York work, you'd pick up your trim little skirts in a flurry and hasten back to Deerfield in time to help with the fall canning."

"As bad as that?" The red robe was having its effect on Lois' sense of humor.

"As bad as that. My best friend, Dick Spaulding, worked from midnight to sunrise for a time—except good deals when he needed the exact light. Penhold, the writer, invariably gets up speed on a dingy old typewriter about four in the morning, and punctuates every page or so with a sip of cordial. Even Spaulding used to drink Forbidden Fruit until his stomach caved in. Patsy Wood is the only girl I know who doesn't use a stimulant, and Pat smokes like the devil. Van Duss got in raw with cocaine a few years ago, and had to lay off till he broke it up. Now he takes a French mixture that makes him light-headed and carefree."

"You really mean this, Philip?" Lois folded a rim of the lounging robe carefully.

"I'm afraid I do, puss; but don't look so downheartened. We all live through it—some thrive on it."

"What do you take?" she forced herself to say lightly.

"Whisky, raw and biting. But not much. Not enough to speak of. The crowd laugh at me for my moderation."

"And what does that woman take—Antoinette Chevalier?" There was a commanding tone in her voice as she asked the question.

A flush came in Philip's cheeks, and he leaned over to pick up a paper knife and play with it as he answered:

"Cigarettes mostly. I really don't know. See here, Lois, you mustn't be shocked. It isn't anything unusual. People that do creative, imaginative work are at a high tension; they have to have something to relieve the strain."

"Is Mrs. Meredith going to be home for luncheon?" interrupted Cora suavely.

Lois started.

"Are we?" she asked, turning to her husband.

"We are; but we dine out. I'm going to have you meet some more people. They are old friends of Uncle Lem's. Don't look frightened," he laughed, as Cora vanished. "All you need is a smart

frock and hat, and you'll be second to none. You're a rather new type; on a magazine cover you'd score."

"One thing more," she insisted, "and then I'm going to unpack, and you must show me your studio. You know, I care more about your success than anything else in the world, and you told me you were a poor man." She looked around her as she spoke. "Please explain all this."

"Another Cinderella come to life," he jeered. "Why, my dear child, when you see a few other apartments, I'll probably have to keep a padlock on you. I am a poor, struggling, browbeaten artist with a few thousand left me out of Uncle Lem's wreck. I'm only a humble beginner, Lois, with very moderate surroundings. You haven't grasped the proportion yet. Wait a month, and then tell me what you think."

She shook her head.

"I don't know what I dare think," she said, rising in spite of his restraining arm. "I've been revolutionized. Deerfield, and yesterday, and even the party last night, seem miles and miles in the background. I'm beginning to believe I've married an extravagant spendthrift that needs watching. I don't think I'd better buy the new clothes for to-night, do you?"

"You are a find!" he insisted. "Run along and unpack like an obedient child. I'll unlock the studio and take you within. It's all out of order, but I won't let any one touch it but myself."

Half an hour later, Lois, having laid her simple possessions in the satchelpadded drawers, Philip took her to the one closed room. It was a large, bright room, decorated with the usual flotsam and jetsam which somehow always finds its way into such quarters. The modeling block, the easels, half-sketched and finished canvases, several pastel heads, a dozen or so small water colors, and a group of crayon things caused Lois to flit excitedly from one to the other, exclaiming with pleasure over the talent displayed.

"How wonderful, Philip! How beau-

tiful! You never did any of these things when you were home. All I ever saw then was a sketch or so of a sleeping cow in a daisy field. Here's a crayon thing—Philip, it's me! It's your remembrance of me as a little girl, at the time we played circus, and you tumbled out of the loft. Why, Philip, how lovely of you to make that! And you never told me. Did I look like that? No, it's all idealized—and this, and this, and oh—*this* one! Where did you get the ideas? How long does it take? Philip, you must succeed—you can't help it!"

"Who says the world hasn't confidence in me?" Philip demanded of a cracked palette. "Now, Lois, promise me you won't rave outside. It would make me crawl to shelter. These things are the bad, immature efforts of a young, headstrong gentleman. The crayon of you is awful stuff—you look as if the sawdust was running out of your dolly and the hollowness of the world was overwhelming. I'm going to do another of you, Lois, in a sea-foam gown such as Fay suggested. I propose this winter to seriously go to work—to do something worth while. You know, we are all sitting around with our fingers crossed, waiting for the exhibition. Every one has tried to screw their courage to the sticking point. What do you say for this as an idea?"

He drew her over to an outlined canvas of a man and woman, the woman's figure more developed than the other.

"Of course, you can't tell anything about it yet," he explained. "The idea is—shall I keep it for a surprise?"

"No, please!" she begged.

"It's to be called 'The Parting,' and I'm going to put into the picture the repressed emotion which centuries of civilization have taught woman to cultivate and display. The man is leaving her—tired of the game, half pitying, half despising her. She is letting him go without a protest, without reproaches. She has kept the tears, the usual hysterical outburst within, waiting until his last footstep dies away. Then the storm will break. I'm awkward at explaining it, but it seemed to me to be a big thing."

Lois stared at the rudely drawn figures, her eyes large and farseeing.

"It ought to be wonderful," she murmured. "I understand. She is saying good-by to the very dearest, most precious, most perilous thing that life ever gives a woman. She is powerless to retain it; she is helpless because of her womanhood, because of what women have been taught to consider their part in the scheme. Philip, you can make it a terrible picture if you choose."

He turned away abruptly.

"It ought to be. It is the saddest, yet most frequent, tragedy that a woman faces. She gives her best to the man she loves, and he takes it as carelessly as he would a newly picked bud, and then——"

"Where did you get the idea?" Lois interrupted, still looking at the canvas.

"I don't know. Any number of places. It's been simmering for some time. I half thought of Patsy Wood and Richard Spaulding—only a vague resemblance, of course."

"Are they engaged?" she said quickly.

"That's good! Of course not! They're pals, good friends. Pat has had a hard time in the city, and Spaulding helped her. He would never love any woman enough to marry her. But I've been afraid that she cared more than was comfortable."

"How awful!" Lois murmured.

"Then he surely would marry her. Philip, have you ever talked with him about it?"

"Lois, I am going to get a stenographer, and make a little extra money off your naïve remarks. My dear child, men don't marry women just because said women happen to love said men. Quite the reverse. It's infinitely more satisfactory to marry them when there will be no heart-rending scenes after the first few years. Now, it isn't Dick's fault that Patsy——"

"Of course it is!" flashed back Lois. "He must have made her love him. You don't seem to remember that men must take the brunt and blame, no matter what——"

"Lois, I tell you solemnly I am going to engage the stenographer to-day.

Please don't waste any more such theories on thin air. I can see them in a muckraking magazine, entitled 'Thoughts of a New England Bride Upon Arriving in New York.' I don't mean to make fun of you, dear, but it is odd to hear you talk. You don't understand, but you will. Too quickly, perhaps. Men and women are different in their relationships than they are in Deerfield. Back there it's a regular, three-times-a-week-calling process; then the banns are posted. Am I not right? Better change your dress before lunch, Lois. I'm going to take you driving."

Lois smiled, without answering. When she reached the door she turned back to ask:

"One more question, Philip: Are you going to make the woman in your picture bitter or crushed?"

"Neither—stunned."

Lois shut the door obediently.

She sat at the dainty luncheon table, pouring tea, with a keen sense of pleasure in her new surroundings. Her craving for beauty, unacknowledged before, was being gratified, and the shy, virgin hopes and fears that had materialized in so bold, so ardent a fashion, were beginning to waken the still depths which contained the woman's character.

"Where do Patsy Wood and Eleanor Ralph live?" she asked, after Philip told her he had ordered a cab for the park drive.

"Studios—apartments—we'll see them in a day or so."

"Are they all alone?"

"Yes. Eleanor's chum married last year. Her family are out West somewhere, but she's been in the city for over eight years."

"Don't they have any one that belongs to them?"

"Not that ever bothers. Why?"

"It seems strange, doesn't it? I should think they would be timid of the city."

"Probably were at first. Have some more salad, Lois?"

"No, thank you. Philip, if it is true about Patsy Wood and Richard Spaulding, how can the girl work? Isn't she

so unhappy that she cannot do good things? I think you ought to be fairly comfortable before you paint or model anything worth while. I mean comfortable inside—that contented, snug, happy feeling gives you the poise with which to see and understand things terrible."

"Never asked the lady. You might sound her about it."

"You are wanted at the telephone, Mr. Meredith," said Cora.

"Excuse me, dear," he told Lois, leaving the room.

Presently he came back, with an embarrassed expression.

"I've got to go out—on business. We'll have to cut the drive short. I tell you what we'll do: We'll take a short whirl around, and then I'll drive you down to the shop Fay bleats about, and get a costume for to-night. They'll fit you all out. I'll call for you when I'm through."

"Where are you going?" Lois asked. "I don't mind at all. Only I would rather you would pick out the dress."

"I? My dear, they will pick out the dress and hat and everything else you need. Remember, you must let the madame decide."

"And you are going?"

"To a studio, to see some new materials. It really is important, as they might be a find. I'll hurry as fast as I can. You see, it is after three now."

As Lois sat beside Philip in the taxi, whirling down the drive, she laughed out loud.

"I was thinking what Aunt Martha and the boys would say and do. Imagine living within a few hours of all this, and yet never having seen it."

A peculiar expression crossed her husband's face.

"I think it is too late to do any more transplanting," he told her gently. "We'd better content Aunt Martha with summer visits."

"Why, Philip!" exclaimed the girl. "I've counted so on having her with me and seeing and——"

"I know, but she wouldn't fit in. Can't you see her with her temperance pledges among Fay and his set? Never

mind; we won't bother over it now. You know, Fay is giving a child's luncheon on Friday. It's sure to be great fun?"

"Who is going?" asked Lois. She kept seeing Aunt Martha's homely, wistful face, with the sharp yet kindly eyes that Lois had obeyed and trusted in place of her dead mother's.

"Oh, the crowd. Fay has new wrinkles for it, he says. He always gives funny romps."

"He seems to have a great deal of spare time," she objected. "I always thought of New York men as being ones who worked without end."

"Wait till I get that stenographer before you go any further," she was reminded; and then the cab drew up before a smart shop, where a uniformed attendant helped them to alight.

"Do the right thing, please," Philip said to the tall, graceful woman in black satin who bowed patronizingly. "I'll call for Mrs. Meredith in an hour."

Left alone, Lois gazed at the rows and rows of dainty, shimmering gowns, the lingerie, the tempting kimonos, and filmy tea gowns, hats with rainbow feathers, soft, satin-lined capes, every color, every style, every cloth imaginable. She edged toward a case of lace waists, to look at them in bewilderment.

"Green," decided the madame. "Green, with pipings of black. She would look well with an empire effect. This way, please. See if the *suède* shoes and the *princesse* bonnet match that last gown of Rosette's."

Another half hour, and she was being poked and pried and turned about by two elaborately dressed women, while madame stood by, criticizing her good and bad points as freely as Patsy Wood had done. Then she was taken into a dressing room, where the transformation transpired. A slender girl in a pale-green silk gown, unmistakably French make, looked at herself in the glass, lifted the skirt slowly to notice the soft petticoats of exactly the same shade, the tiny green pumps, and silk stockings. One hand reached up to stroke the dainty green-and-black hat covered with a feathery edge that shad-

ed her eyes and brought out the deep sea tints in them.

It was a new Lois who smiled when the madame asked carelessly if it suited. It was Mrs. Philip Meredith who submitted to the fitting of the black evening cape, also lined with green, which a young girl threw over her shoulders and fastened with a heavy gold cord. She would not be afraid now to meet Philip's friends.

"Would madame like a negligee?" purred the head saleswoman.

Madame would; but madame did not know if she should. However, she picked out a soft, creamy thing to wait for Philip's consent, and seated herself in the gold-and-white reception room, to watch the stream of fashionable shoppers. Occasionally she would lean forward to catch a glimpse of her new self in the long French mirror. She smiled happily each time she saw the green-gowned little lady coquetting with her own image.

Meantime, Philip had driven hurriedly to Tony Chevalier's studio flat, and rushed upstairs, ringing unceremoniously.

"Come in, Phill!" said Tony's voice. "I'm dressing."

He opened the door, and stalked into the studio proper.

"I'm in a hurry, Tony," he called to her. "Don't bother fussing."

"All right," was the prompt reply; "I'll call your bluff."

And a vision in a purple-and-gold tea gown greeted him. Tony's yellow hair was loosely plaited and hanging over either shoulder. Only a man would have been bluffed into thinking that she had not dressed carefully for the occasion. There was a mischievous sparkle in her brown eyes as she patted him affectionately on the shoulder.

"You are a queer youngster," she said. "Gone and married a placid little doll lady that will drive your ardent self into a madhouse—or a divorce court. Yet you rush over here to me instantler to look at a lot of fake materials. I always said you weren't dependable. Plastic as modeling wax, aren't you?"

Philip jerked away from her hand. "Don't be a wet blanket, Tony," he said crossly. "I'm not here to listen to your opinions of my marriage. If the stuff's any good, I want it; if it isn't, let's hammer the art pirates and say good-by."

"So you don't want to be friends any more?"

Tony seated herself on the arm of a large chair. Her small feet, incased in Turkish slippers, swung to and fro, almost touching Meredith's hand as it hung at his side.

"Of course I do, Tony. I want you to be friends with Lois."

"That's good!" She laughed shrilly. "Friends with Lois! Lois and I would have about as much in common as a theological institute and a French café. Do you think I am a fool, Philip?"

"I think you are a sensible girl—woman—whatever you choose to call yourself. What is the horrible fact to prevent your friendship with my wife, Tony?"

"Just this: You loved me once—you can't deny it now. And I loved you. There is nothing quite so dead as a dead infatuation. I realize all that. And it would not be pleasant for your wife and I to sit side by side, watching the corpse."

Meredith shrugged his shoulders uneasily.

"You're morbid," he told her. "That is an extremist's viewpoint. We were rather good friends—once. I don't think we ever lied to each other about the outcome, did we?"

"No; but you lied about your marriage. You told me of a very simple child who was like your sister, who lived on a New England farm where you spent vacations, and where your father and mother had once lived close by; you told me amusing stories about her innocence and ignorance concerning the world; you said she had always loved you, that some day you were going to tell her she must not keep on loving you, that it would be a bad mistake. Oh, you made yourself out quite the important person. By and by you came to me more than ever for com-

fort and companionship. You began to talk of our always being together, didn't you? You laughed when I mentioned this girl. Said she would never be suited to be your wife, that she belonged back in the farm atmosphere. Then was the time you must have been thinking of marriage, Philip—was it not?

"God knows why you didn't tell me; but it seems to be the way men do with women who are fellow workers. I believed you, like the fool I've always been where you were concerned. Then you stopped talking about her, was uneasy every time I mentioned her name. When I was North last month, you wrote me you were to be married. Do you remember what you said in the letter, Phil? 'The easiest end to a predestined romance.' Would you want your Lois to see those words?"

Meredith's handsome face went white as the girl finished speaking. He faced her abruptly.

"Tony, you've been one of the squarest pals a man could have. And I'll like you to the last clang of the gong. But you've got to stop talking this way about Lois and our marriage. I was desperate when I wrote to you. I didn't know just what I did say—and written words hold their meaning so much longer than hastily spoken phrases. Tony, be as square with me now as you have been before. Look the situation in the face. I was going downhill, in debt, no work, bad ways, and too much fun. You know that is the truth. I was discouraged, desperate, blue, and I had to pull up, and pull up quickly. A fellow can't do that by himself; it's only a rare friend of a woman who loves him that can force such an issue. You and I wouldn't have been happy together; we're too emotional, too full of damnable temperament. Lois—is—different. She has the strong calm of a man and the tender patience of a woman who has not battled with the world. I needed her. And I knew she loved me. That was why I married."

"So?" Tony's brown eyes seemed to look into his secret thoughts as she smiled at him sarcastically. "So you

picked a general-utility woman, one who would bear the brunt of the burden, and be satisfied with a stray pat? You took advantage of a girl's generous love to act as the tonic on your jaded ambitions? I congratulate you, Philip. You were fortunate to have some one ready to come. But I don't envy your wife her task."

"I tell you, you don't understand. It was a crisis in my career; it wasn't as cold-blooded and selfish as it sounds. And there isn't any reason in the world why our comradeship shouldn't continue. Lois would not mind. She would understand. Suppose my marriage was the easiest way out? What of that? You've sneered yourself at ardent love matches. I do love Lois—not blindly, not absolutely—no. But I loved her from a sense of—duty, from old associations——" He stumbled awkwardly, trying to find the words.

Impulsively Tony buried his bright-yellow head on his shoulder, her arms hanging about his neck pleadingly.

"Dear boy, what do words matter?" she murmured. "See, I'm not really jealous or angry. I understand. I know. Phil, I'm not so old except in experience, and I've had such a foolish, tumbled sort of existence—you know about it. I'm so alone. Sometimes it seems to me that all bohemians have the faculty of being left alone when the big frolics are over. Perhaps we court it unconsciously. But don't leave me, Phil! Give me just a share in your love—I can't stand it to be turned down. Please! And the crowd all know how I feel. They'll watch every move, every gesture, every look between us—don't! Lois can darn your socks and order your dinner; she can sit opposite you at the table, and tell you if your hair is growing gray, or if you need a vacation; but she can't give you the thought and companionship I can give you. It isn't in her. Philip, tell me that you'll do——"

Meredith could not have told why, yet he let the girl's head stay on his shoulder, and he stroked it tenderly as he whispered:

"It's the same here, Tony. We won't

let it make a difference in our friendship. Lois wouldn't care; I'm sure she would understand."

Tony drew away abruptly—a happy, triumphant light in her eyes.

"We won't ever talk about this again," she said firmly, and with a woman's tact. "Now, tell me about your exhibition picture. I'm discouraged. I can't get a start."

Relieved, manlike, Meredith took advantage of the question.

"Of course you can," he told her. "You see, my idea is this."

He summarized his theme quickly to the fantastic little purple lady before him, glad that the breach had been so easily healed. He had wondered many times since he had written Tony of the marriage whether she would not have her innings on the question.

Presently he drew out his watch.

"I must be off, Tony. I'm due now."

Her eyes closed a brief second.

"Is it to meet—her?" she asked.

"Yes, of course," Meredith told her lightly. "Now, we want to see you up at the flat soon. Soon, do you hear? We'll get your exhibition picture started directly. You ought to do something good for that; you've been lazy long enough. Good-by, Tony, dear."

He kissed her lightly on the forehead.

She followed him to the doorway, smiling. The reverberating thud of a closing outer door brought a change into her face. A strained, savage look replaced the smile.

"Twenty-four years old to-morrow," she said mockingly, as she stared in a small glass. "Twenty-four years old to-morrow—and Philip has forgotten the day. Happy birthday, little one!" Then her mouth set in a hard, straight line. She bent over to her easel, and began filling in a background rapidly. "I'll do it!" she exclaimed out loud. "I'll ——" After more consideration, she shook her head and smiled. "No, the other would be better—much, much better," she told herself. "That last idea, Tony, is decidedly clubby!"

Lois was waiting eagerly for Philip's return. She had wearied of the shop-

pers and the polite saleswomen, who lied glibly about complexions, features, and figures. She was beginning to wonder if something had happened, when a familiar voice said:

"Now, this is luck! I've been thinking I would call to-morrow. What a perfectly stunning get-up! My dear, you're wonderful in that."

"Miss Ralph!" acknowledged Lois, a thrill of feminine content rushing over her as she saw the other's admiration. "Philip brought me down here—he insists that I have a gown for to-night."

"Dining out?"

"Yes. Won't you wait until Philip comes? I've picked out something else, but it's terribly expensive, and perhaps I shouldn't—"

"Listen to me," said Eleanor firmly. "Don't ever draw back from buying any clothes except on one excuse—that they are not becoming. My child, you will have Philip eating out of your hand sooner if you dress to make the most of yourself than if you try to fill one of those dime banks every week."

"Don't believe her, Lois; she's a humbug," whispered Philip, who had come in and was listening with infinite amusement. "I shall forbid any intimacy whatsoever."

"Where have you been, Mr. Truant?" asked Eleanor, shaking hands. "Before I forget it, Patsy Wood is having three hundred pounds of clay lugged up to her studio, and Dick Spaulding has gone to Jersey for a few days. That's the latest."

"Indeed?" said Philip absent-mindedly. "Lois, you are charming! Now what is this horrible extravagance?"

Fifteen minutes later the coveted negligee and two lace blouses were carried out to the cab. The three climbed in, whirled down for a cup of tea at Sherry's, and then took Eleanor home.

"The city is a beautiful place to live in," Lois said earnestly, as they entered their apartment. "Everything is so wonderful. I never knew there could be so many, many new, lovely things. I'm going to be so happy, Philip. And you are so good to me!"

The man flushed shamefacedly as he accepted her offered kiss. He knew as he bent over her that he could not return her thrill of love, that he could not take her in his arms to whisper the wonderful, subtle, broken sentences that only man and wife exchange. He had played his part in the game squarely—so he argued with his conscience. He married the girl who loved him from childhood, saving her from pity, suffering, comment such as would come in her narrow environment. He had married her because he needed her, because he recognized in himself a deadly weakness which he could not fight alone.

But now that he had taken her from her setting, the same as one would tear a canvas from its frame, the feeling vanished. Was it only forty-eight hours since he had promised to love, honor, and cherish? A numb, lifeless feeling came over him as he tried to smile back into those clear, penetrating eyes.

"You deserve much goodness, Lois," was all he answered.

Abashed, she slipped away, and Meredith tramped up and down his studio, staring relentlessly at the outlined exhibition picture, wondering if, in the years to come, he would forget this quixotic folly; if Lois would be content to adapt herself to the new ways; if she would be blind to his lack of ardor; if his work would be helped or hampered by the presence of unrequited love in the home; if Tony would be the same sparkling little comrade she had always been, willing to remain in the background, unacknowledged.

Back and forth he tramped, thinking out the situation, not knowing that all his hopes and fears might be expressed in fewer words than he employed in a single pacing of the room. Would men and women work only for Philip's advancement? Would his ambitions be realized without suffering, sacrifice, or distasteful drudgery? Would all his pleasures be increased, all his handicaps and annoyances be eliminated by some kindly fate? Would the house-and-garden woman prove the general-utility woman Tony had spoken of? Would she stand stoically to the front, ready

to ward off the blows that eventually carve the natural rock into images worthy of man's admiration?

Foolish, blind Philip! He had yet to learn the first and last and finest lesson life teaches—that the harder the blows, the finer the carving on the rock; that the law of an eye for an eye dominates success and happiness; that to win fame he must yield an equal portion of what men call contentment; that achievement and sorrows of the soul go hand in hand, each pointing the way to the other.

CHAPTER V.

Richard Spaulding called for Lois and Philip in his car on the day of Fay Forrest's luncheon. Lois, who had tried to remain at home gracefully, was determined to make the best of it. Philip told her that she must be more adaptive and gracious to her new surroundings.

"You'll be even sending Black-hand letters to Dick if you ever get to know him," he remarked lightly.

Lois fastened her cape.

"I don't think, Philip, that I will try to know your friends. It would be so much more comfortable for all of us to remain calling acquaintances."

"Please don't inform them of the fact," Meredith remarked, a trifle bitterly. "And don't look shocked if Fay tells a few choice bridge stories. You know, Lois, one mustn't keep their own atmosphere with them constantly, like a nice pocket handkerchief that can be taken out and put away at will."

"Aunt Martha writes that the bay colt is broken," Lois said abruptly.

"Um! Did you tell Eleanor Ralph to come to dinner next week? I've an idea from something Spaulding said that he was going abroad. If it's true, I'm going to give him the farewell dinner. So don't ask Eleanor until we find out."

"Will it be an elaborate affair?"

"Of course not—just a handful. There's Dick driving up now. I suppose he'll call for Patsy, too. You look rather nice, Lois."

Meredith rushed to open the door.

Spaulding unbuttoned his heavy driving coat—the fall day was sharp—and sat down languidly.

"I'm dead!" he told them wearily. "I worked like a Trojan for ten hours yesterday, and my eyes are seeing queer, quivering things—lines, and broken spars, and circles, and triangles glowing with fire."

"Better leave the dope alone," advised Philip anxiously. "You oughtn't to play out like that."

"Why don't you work just so many hours a day?" asked Lois sympathetically. "A regular schedule would be ever so——"

"Dick, for Heaven's sake, take this child in your arms, and explain that we cannot paint pictures the way men paint a house. She has stared at me in silent reproach ever since we came home because the studio is collecting a new coat of dust. I'm afraid to have a good idea unless it promises to appear at eight in the morning. I can see Lois attacking me with a union button and working papers, calling me 'Scab!' and other pleasant names."

Lois' face was a deep scarlet. Spaulding looked at her in amusement.

"You have a good many new ideas, haven't you, Mrs. Meredith? It is something like having an ardent dynamo with one to take a chance on its exploding. One never knows when you will approve."

"Are we ready?" asked Lois abruptly.

She could feel the man's quizzical black eyes staring at her boldly. Without further answer, she started to the door, the men following.

"Where do we go now?" asked Philip.

"I promised Tony I would pick her up."

"Not Patsy?"

"No. She wanted to walk, I believe."

Lois eyed him critically. He put on full speed, and the car bounded over the hilly street, down a curved path into a less fashionable district, and then stopped in front of a red brick barracks.

"Run up and get her, will you, Phil?" Spaulding asked carelessly.

Tipping his hat to Lois, Meredith scrambled out. As he entered the glass door, Spaulding turned in his seat to remark:

"That husband of yours has a lot of talent, but it needs development. Don't let him be lazy."

Lois smiled eagerly.

"Just what I think, Mr. Spaulding; but I don't know where to begin. It doesn't seem as if I say the right thing. You see, Philip laughs at me so."

"Keep him close beside you, and make him work. The chap could make us play second fiddle if he chose. But he never tried. Between ourselves, he has just enough money to spoil him. It is the man who has to work for his breakfast that knows how to accomplish."

"You understand, don't you?" Lois was beginning to like this strangely old yet young man, whose work Philip said was among the best in New York.

"I'm fond of your husband, and I've tried to lecture him periodically. But it doesn't go at all. He slumps along, and does a spirited daub whenever he feels he has to keep his hand in. Philip was cut out for a rich man."

"If you should think of any way we could make him work, will you tell me?" she begged. "You see, I am so new, so very much alone."

Spaulding's black eyes softened as he noted the girl's wistful look.

"I will that," he promised. "Now, you mustn't hate me if you find out I'm a scamp and a scalawag, and you mustn't believe Philip if he tells you I'm a dope. I do not work under any influence particularly, just an occasional stimulant that I need when I'm through working. You see, I was pretty sick once, from exposure and—lack of nutrition, and it left me badly off."

"Then you haven't always been a success?" she ventured timidly.

The man's laugh was not pleasant to listen to.

"Hardly!" he drawled. "But I've forgotten all about that. Sometimes I smile at these youngsters who go to bed expecting a call from Fame by morning."

You know, real success never comes that route. Not even when it seems to. You must remember the world, or even the critic who hails the newborn genius, never knows quite all the inside workings. I'm not a nice man in other ways, Mrs. Meredith, even if I do have a sprig of laurel occasionally. I'm horribly selfish, so some one told me the other day; but I learned that when I learned to work hard. I learned to work for work's sake, to labor all day at manual stuff that grated like the devil, and to take my noon hour and my bedtime for the things I wanted to do. That is the way real men and women advance."

He tooted the horn as he spoke, glancing up at the window.

"Perhaps Miss Chevalier is not ready," suggested Lois.

"Perhaps she is making Philip sit and hold hands while she eggs him on to help her with a bit of hard drawing," he flung back frankly. "Now, here's another thing, little Mrs. Philip: You must not let Tony get her influence back again. See here—this is plain shop talk between you and me. It's all a part of the game. You are the practical wife of an impractical man. Now, which of you must open your eyes, take the brunt of things, and not flinch when unpleasant facts confront you? You know as well as I—better! Philip is a susceptible sort of youth that Tony has marked for her own long ago. Tony is a world in herself—an impossible, Ibsenish sort of creature, with a dash of De Maupassant thrown in to make her interesting. She has had a hard scramble to keep afloat, and deludes herself with thinking that every one must help her along as she dictates. Just why I've never been able to fathom. I'm perfectly frank with Tony, Mrs. Meredith. Please don't brand me as a hypocrite along with my other accomplishments. She knows what I think."

And he tooted the horn again.

"You believe she has an influence over my husband?" Lois' tone was businesslike, devoid of emotion.

"I do. A bad one. Tony knows how to work for her own cause only. Won't

you let me come and talk to you sometimes? You're a restful little lady."

A pleased expression came into Lois' face.

"Do!" she answered. "I want to ask you other things—things that Philip would only laugh at. Here they come," she added, as Tony Chevalier, clad in a bright scarlet suit, with a flowered toque, came down to the curb.

Philip helped her in carefully, and then sat between them.

"Thank you," Tony said carelessly, as Philip wrapped the robe over her gown. "Howdy do, dear? You're looking quite acclimated. The dress is good. Eleanor Ralph told me you got it."

"Thank you," Lois replied stiffly.

Tony poked Spaulding in the back.

"Hurry up, Enemy—we're late. I had a dozen odd things to do before I could dress."

The car whizzed ahead. It was only a few minutes before Lois and Tony were entering another apartment, followed by the men. Fay's manservant let them in, showing them the reception room and library adjoining.

"We'll put our wraps in Fay's room," said Tony, making herself at home. "Where are the others, Benson?"

"Miss Wood and Miss Ralph are inside. The gentlemen are in the rear looking at a model of a flying machine," explained the man.

"Then come with me, and have a half hour scandal talk," Tony finished brightly. "Au revoir. Don't let Fay stay out there too long. I'm keen for the party to begin."

In the bedroom Eleanor Ralph was helping Patsy Wood find the hatpins hidden in her big black bonnet.

"Hullo, children!" said Eleanor, while the others nodded. "Come in and tell us the news. I got the engagement for the oratorio, and a chance to go to Chautauqua this summer. Let's pray the gods don't force me to take it. Mrs. Meredith, you can put your cape there. Fay has a model of an aeroplane that he cottoned onto; it's awfully clever. Patsy, your hair is a disgrace, and you look washed out and tired to death."

Benson tapped on the door.

"Mr. Forrest and the gentlemen are in the library," he announced.

Tony taking the lead, the others trailed along.

"I'm coming to see you," Patsy said to Lois, as they brought up the rear.

Lois smiled. It seemed that she was to be deluged with curious callers.

Fay Forrest, dressed in a baby costume of white mull, trimmed with blue armlets and a huge sash, greeted them with infantile embraces, shook an enormous rattle in their faces, and then cried lustily. Carleton Van Duss, who wore a pink gingham suit of rompers, with half socks and white sandals, waved his hand enthusiastically, murmured half a dozen risqué paraphrases on nursery rhymes, and invited the women to play with him.

Lois drew back. She acknowledged introductions to one or two strange men, and then found herself in a corner, talking to Spaulding.

"Isn't Fay the worst?" he asked, as they watched him form the guests into a line, preparatory to play "Going to Jerusalem." "We won't bother you, dear," he called out as Carleton Van Duss pointed a toy rifle at them to force them into the ring. "You didn't care about it?" he added hastily.

"Not at all."

Lois drew a sigh of relief. Another bevy of smartly dressed women came into the room, kissed Tony and Eleanor, shook hands with Patsy, and fell on the necks of their hosts.

"Do New York people do much of this sort of thing?" Lois asked Spaulding.

"This sort of people. Fay always tears off something new. He thrives on it, the same as a tenement baby would on modified milk."

The romp was being carried on with much amusement. Philip had taken a vaudeville artist for his partner in a subsequent game of forfeits, and was laughing loudly, a red schoolboy's cap on his head, and a lunch basket strapped at his side.

The luncheon itself was a revelation to Lois. From the immense polished table, centered with a doll house filled

with orchids and violets, to the place cards, consisting of building blocks and small cradles lettered in gold with the guest's name, the absolute idiocy of the affair struck her forcibly. First bowls of bread and milk were served—only to afford the hosts an opportunity to perform their juvenile act of crying.

Then an elaborate meal of many courses, with as many wines, was served. At the close, after nursery rhymes were recited, and Fay was chastised by his assistant host, Carleton, the men and women smoked freely, and discussed the possibilities of a new divorce.

It was nearly five when they began to go, and Lois experienced a feeling of relief as Philip told her to get her wrap. Spaulding was going to take them home.

He found room in his car for Tony, Patsy Wood, and the Merediths.

They dropped Tony off first amid a wave of good-bys and frivolous slang phrases. Then Spaulding took the Merediths home, and wheeled the car about in the direction of Patsy's studio.

"Well," he asked, breaking silence, "have you come out of it?"

"Come out of what?"

"You know—the high-minded stand you took the other day. You labeled me a double-dyed villain of the 'Why Girls Leave Home' type, and sent me packing to Jersey with a desire to rip things up pretty generally."

"Did I?" she said absent-mindedly.

"Yes, you did. Now I'm good-natured again. I've had a delightful little chat with your house-and-garden woman. She's fine, Patsy! You ought to know her. Only don't get her views on matrimony, please. You'd have me in irons before the day was out. But I like her; she has a fresh, vital grip on problems that the rest of us handle with nervous, shaking fingers."

"I'm glad you talked to her," Patsy said stiffly.

"I'm glad, too." He turned the car north. "We may as well take a spin," he proposed. "I expect to go abroad next week, Patsy, and I want to have all the last minutes with you possible."

He spoke easily, but his eyes watched the girl's face cautiously.

She tightened her clutch on the arm of the car.

"Are you? Where?"

"North Germany. Compton is over there sketching, and he writes it's great stuff. So I'm going. I'm rather run out of ideas."

"It will be very fine for you," she said, in the same stilted tone.

"You won't be lonesome, will you?" he asked. "Not after feeling the way you said you did—about—me."

"Oh, no," she answered. "No—I won't."

"Now, Pat, don't send me shipboard with that zero feeling chasing down my back. I won't stand for it. Let's go back to the studio and talk it over."

"Very well," she agreed passively, "if there is anything new to say about it."

They climbed up to the girl's dingy rooms, and sat facing each other dumbly. Something in her face stopped Spaulding's usual easy flow of words. He waited for her to speak.

Presently he said quietly:

"You don't seem to want to talk, Patsy—is that it?"

"Oh, no," she answered. "Only there seems to be so little to say. You may as well forget what I told you before you went to Jersey. It may make you a little more comfortable."

"Are you going to remember it?"

"I?" She threw back her head defiantly.

"Oh, well, if you insist on making a tragedy out of nothing, it isn't my fault. I'm merely going on a sketching trip. I'll be back by spring, and then everything will be lovely. You won't let me tide you over?"

"No," she said sharply. "You are right there—I won't. Don't write me, either. I want to be all alone."

"Who is he?" asked Spaulding, in a bantering tone.

Patsy rose and paced the floor. She had taken off her coat, and the dainty pink dress—her one best gown—showed the slim figure to advantage.

"Oh, won't you please go?" she said

earnestly. "Don't you see that you're making it hard for me—that you're rubbing salt into the wound? What is the use in telling conventional lies, Dick? I love you. That's the truth. And you don't love me. You'll never love me; it isn't in you to love any woman in the true way. You are going away to continue your career; you don't care a snap of your temperamental fingers whether I am left alone; it is only when you are in town and have idle moments that I interest and amuse you. Don't talk to me of Philip Meredith's marrying an old-time sweetheart, and it being against the grain to do so—he did the only honorable thing a man can do. I want you to go away, do you hear me? I shall refuse to see you if you stay."

"Do you mean this?" asked Spaulding sharply.

"Good God! Do you think a girl tells a man she loves him merely for amusement? No! That is a man's prerogative! It takes an endless process of humbling and suffering, and much, much love, before a woman's pride lets her speak. I want you to go away from me. I want to be alone."

"Then I'm sorry," Spaulding added, in a low voice. "Patsy, I am so sorry! But where there is no love between a man and woman, it is far better to suffer apart than together. I told you the other day I had been frank concerning my feeling for you. I am not to blame. I do not love you. And I cannot change the feeling." He paused, watching her struggle to keep back the tears. "I want to help you whenever I can, but you won't let me. You'll starve, Patsy; you'll go to the wall. It's your own fault. Believe me, I would give much to be able to love as you do. But it has gone from me; it went when I threw myself into a successful career heart and soul. The attitude that I have robbed you of your best years and then left you alone, without recompense, is new to me. It is new to you; you must admit that much. Our set never quibbled over formalities and minor conventions. If I monopolized you with the interest which an honorable friendship would demand, didn't you help in

the game? Didn't you show yourself willing?"

"Will you go?" she begged.

He gathered his coat and hat in his hand.

"There will be some sort of fool celebration because of my going," he added. "Philip is going to give it. I hope you'll come. If I can stall it, I will. Good-by, Patsy. A line to the Broadway address will always reach me."

"Good-by," she answered, her back turned to him.

He lingered at the doorway a moment to see if she would look at him or take his hand. But the pink figure was motionless. So he shut the door and tiptoed down the stairs. Unconsciously he hurried. He had a secret dread lest she relent and call him back. And he hated scenes.

CHAPTER VI.

The preparations for the farewell dinner in honor of Dick Spaulding were painfully simple compared to Fay's affair. When the dainty favors in the form of tiny suit cases plastered with labels and filled with candied flowers came, Lois felt a keen delight in handling them, and in planning her decorations and helping prepare the harder dishes of the menu. Eleanor Ralph, Patsy, Tony Chevalier, Fay Forrest, and Van Duss were invited. Van had another engagement which he could not break, for which Lois was devoutly thankful.

Philip insisted on her ordering another gown, so she bought a heavy tan thing which showed the slender lines well and brought out the gold tints in her hair. She protested against such extravagance, but Eleanor, who helped select it, laughed, and boldly ordered shoes and stockings to match.

The dinner was a success, so Philip said. They did have a pleasant evening, varied by Fay's pastel stories and his insistent singing of tenor solos whenever a lull came. Patsy Wood was there in her little pink gown, a rather quiet, subdued Patsy, who sat in the

background, and held Lois' hand tightly when she said good night.

Spaulding managed to draw Lois aside and whisper that he expected to hear of her as the reigning social favorite when he returned.

"And be good to Patsy Wood," he whispered, "will you?"

Lois looked at him pointedly.

"You are coming back soon?" she asked.

"Exhibition week," he said, changing the subject. "Make Phil work."

The rest of the time was frivolous fun, Spaulding saying good-by in mock fashion. The entire party were to wave "bon voyage" at the pier the following day.

Next day, at the pier, when Spaulding heard the last call "All off!" he shook hands with Philip and Lois.

"Work, boy! The exhibition ought to hear from you," he told him gravely. "Write you soon—best wishes—good-by, people—jolly nice in you to do this—good-by, Patsy." And for a brief second the girl's cold fingers lay in his warm ones.

Lois, watching them, impulsively touched Philip's arm.

"The Parting," she whispered.

The next minute Tony Chevalier was pulling them down the gangway, and they were standing, packed in with hundreds of others, waving small flags, handkerchiefs, throwing flowers and kisses galore as the little tug puffed out of the harbor.

"Let's all go downtown for the rest of the day," proposed Fay.

"Shall we?" asked Philip.

"If you wish," Lois wanted to be fair in her part of the bargain.

Patsy went home abruptly, leaving Eleanor to wander away from them in the trail of a new concert manager; and Tony Chevalier, Fay, Van Duss, and the Merediths to bounce down Broadway, stopping at shop windows, and quarreling good-naturedly as to where they would eat dinner.

They went to an Italian table d'hôte where the macaroni, with the brick-red sauce, and bad, highly colored wine were the chief attractions; they talked

of those not present with a charming amount of veracity; they applauded the cheap music with a gusto, and bullied the head waiter into dragging forth soiled New Year souvenirs to take away.

Then they went slumming—Fay's favorite pastime. For the first time in her life, Lois saw the underworld—the world which had hitherto been a carefully concealed, much-dreaded place. She followed the party obediently into café after café, cheap, tawdry, and glaring; she saw her husband drinking too freely, laughing at Tony's clever stories, nodding familiarly to men and women whose faces showed the finger marks of dissipation.

By and by they went into the lower quarter, stopped at the Bowery places where Fay was known and let alone. Lois' head ached, and she felt confused. She wished she might be "ponderous and a little strange."

It was after midnight before they wound up at their home, laughing at the sport they had had, promising to have another outing soon.

"Much obliged, old boy," Philip told Fay, as they parted. "You'll see Tony home, won't you?"

"Of course. Tony won't mind this once, will you?" he laughed.

"Not this once. Besides, I want to go down Broadway again. I'm as wide awake as I was at dinner time," she answered.

"Did you have a good time, Lois?" Philip asked, as they walked away.

She hesitated.

"No, I didn't," she told him briefly. "But I'm glad if the others did. It was interesting."

"You're a regular little Elsie Dinsmore, aren't you?" The irritation in his voice cut her. "You want every one to be happy, even if you have to be a martyr. It's a becoming habit, that. Don't lose it."

The next two months passed rapidly. Thanksgiving was at hand, yet Philip did not favor a return trip to Deerfield. They spent the day in New York, although a fine bird came from the

farm, with vegetables and mince pie made by Aunt Martha.

During that time Lois had grown accustomed to seeing her husband lounge about restlessly, sometimes dashing into the studio and working for a half hour, then tearing out of the house, to be gone until dinner time, often sitting up until daylight, reading a French novel and sipping Chartreuse.

Once, several weeks before, she said timidly at breakfast:

"When does the work begin?"

"Don't nag, Lois," he answered. "It drives out whatever impulse is in a chap. I can't tell. I'm not a machine like Van Duss. He's joined the lithographic tribe, and he's down and out as far as art goes."

So the house-and-garden woman sat back and waited for the work impulse to come. She interested herself in her home, trying to economize, to beautify, to make cheerful for Philip. Occasionally Eleanor Ralph dropped in for a chat. They talked of many things, these two girls—of men and mice, and the fashions, and suffrage, and the chafing-dish habit, and of Patsy Wood, who shut herself up persistently and refused invitations and callers; of Richard Spaulding, sketching in Germany—of all these, but never of Philip or the work he once planned.

Fay Forrest came also, and his friends. But after Thanksgiving there was a dropping off of the round of parties; Philip saw that Lois would not give in to them. So by degrees he went out, and went alone. It was infinitely more comfortable. Something about her solemn, clear eyes made him feel nervous and ill at ease, reminded him constantly that he had voluntarily put himself in the irons of matrimony instead of the bed of ease and progress which he had fancied the creation of a home—his sort of home, mind—would bring.

The first few times Lois minded his absence. She roamed about the apartment, looking at the trifles Philip had picked up abroad, opening and shutting the books. It was one of these nights that she found a clipping in a book of

Patsy's. The poem was culled from a current magazine. Impulsively Lois read it:

Good-by, old boy, good-by.
Seems hard, somehow, to say the words that mean

The things we do.
Good-by, old boy, good-by.
I hope the future will be good to you.

Good-by, old boy, good-by.
Let's smile a little, while your big hand grips tight into mine,

Good-by, old boy, good-by.
Climb on; your train is moving down the line.

Good-by, old boy, good-by.
We've had good days together, just we two,
Since first we met.
Good-by, old boy, good-by.
We'll say the words, but we will not forget!

As she laid it back in the book, she saw it was a collection of Japanese theories about color which Spaulding had given Patsy shortly before he sailed. She hid the book from Philip, lest he see and comment on the meaning of the poem.

By and by she grew used to Philip's absences; it was a relief rather than a sign of neglect. The slender thread of love between them had snapped; of that she was quite sure—and the house-and-garden woman, with infinite patience and tenderness, was waiting with willing hands for the time to come when she might respin the web. Not that her love for Philip ever faltered; such love as hers knew no such term. But it grew weary and faint-hearted, and she asked herself that futile, gnawing question which every woman faces herself with at some time in her married life: "Would it have been better to have never married?"

Tony Chevalier did not come to them any more, yet Lois was sure the girl saw her husband. She refused to think about their relationship, shutting her eyes blindly to anything which bordered on disloyalty. Lois was content to stay in the background for many months, if it need be. That Philip would return to her, that he would realize his deadly self-indulgence, Lois never doubted. It was time and sacrifice that was needed.

Such was the house-and-garden woman's outlook on life; such was her unbiased opinion of a wife's duty.

Toward Christmas she urged the Deerfield trip again—her whole being longed for the farm and home people. But Philip parried the question, and evaded it with the excuse that the exhibition picture needed his attention.

"I haven't seen the picture since you started the outline," she protested. "Sometimes you scarcely work all week, Philip. Couldn't we do the Deerfield trip in two days?" Lois laid her hand on his shoulder gently.

"It's an extra expense," he said, stroking it carelessly.

She smiled.

"If we have the dinner Christmas night, it will cost many times as much, and it would be so——"

"You may go if you wish. Personally I don't care about it."

Her sense of pride made Lois stay in New York. She had expected that her husband would come home with her for that first visit back. He gave her a pretty necklace on Christmas, and told her it looked very well.

"It seems to me you give very expensive things," Lois objected, when Philip made out his list. "Is it necessary to remember all these people so lavishly? Some of them have never called since we came here."

"Of course it is. They are old friends. Fay gives to at least a hundred people—you ought to see his rooms on Christmas Eve! I'm shabby compared to him."

Lois was silent, thinking of the denied trip. She sent a box of novelties which she knew would delight, and wrote her aunt as apologetic a note as she could think of. She was sure Philip would not wish her to come to New York.

A few friends took dinner with them on Christmas, as Philip wished; and in the evening Tony Chevalier dropped in, wearing a magnificent diamond pin.

"Where did you get it?" demanded Eleanor frankly.

Tony smiled.

"From the man who loves me best of all," she answered.

Lois was standing close beside her. A sudden feeling of intuition came over her, and she looked at Tony steadily.

"Philip gave me this," she said, indicating her simple necklace.

The spontaneous flash of triumph in the other woman's face told Lois who had been the giver. And Tony knew she knew.

On New Year's Eve, Philip entertained other people at a café. The supper was a very gorgeous, very gay affair, with beautifully gowned women and handsome men, and seductive music to dazzle the senses. Lois quite enjoyed the break in her stay-at-home existence. They did not get home until early morning, and the next day saw a cross, rather bored Philip, who complained of headache and hinted of economizing in their daily living.

"We could do without many things," Lois said eagerly. "I've thought it all out a good many times."

"What, for instance?" Philip tried to be affable.

"The maid; she only wastes things, and I worry frightfully about it. The cut flowers every day, and the taxi hire, and heavy tips. My clothes and—your clothes could be simpler. We mustn't entertain so lavishly. Then you could have—fewer wines," Lois stumbled along, trying to speak pleasantly.

"You do not understand," Philip told her. "You never will understand, will you? These things are necessary to me. I cannot work without them. You didn't marry a farm hand."

"But you spoke of economizing. Did you mean a less expensive apartment? I am willing——"

"I don't know what I meant!" he answered, striking his open palm against the edge of the table. "Sometimes I wonder if I know myself. It's my work that bothers me—I can't get started."

"Do you try?"

"Of course I try. I tell you, something about this place represses me. I cannot start right. That's all. I need a jolt, or a new inspiration, or something invigorating. This deadly calm,

this poised, assured atmosphere makes me frantic."

"Do you mean," asked Lois, rising, "that my being your wife has crippled your abilities?"

Philip flushed.

"I didn't mean that," he stammered. "Only you seem to expect miracles of me. I can't get you to take a broader point of view; you insist on using Deerfield as your measuring stick."

"And if I used New York?" she interrupted quickly. "What then?"

"For Heaven's sake, don't tell me about New York—don't explain what is wrong with New York!"

"There is nothing the matter with New York City," Lois told him calmly. "Nothing. Writers and artists and poets who claim there is are lying. New York is a big, fine, broad place in which good, honest work is being done. It is the stamping ground for progress and achievement along right lines. Don't think you can blame what happens on the city."

"The flotsam and jetsam come to New York, and Chicago, and like centers, where the everlasting mill of hard work and uplifting enterprises requires the brains and brawn of the citizens. During their hours of honest work these others lead their cap-and-bell existence, play the leech, learn to be more useless to society than the favorite wife in a harem, less able to do a man's work than a pet lap dog, liable to brand the American race as the successor to Nero's people. That is what these writers and artists mean when they attack the city of New York!"

Philip's face was white as he cried angrily:

"So you class your husband and his associates with such people—you brand us as that type of men—you hold your skirts aloof, and pose as the injured, clear-sighted prisoner held by a wedding ring? Would you have millionaires live like New England farmers? Would you forbid pleasure, luxury in any form? Do you ask for a race of pessimistic, ascetic hermits?"

"The millionaires do not pose as artists," she answered, without flinching.

"At least, let us give them the credit of being honest, unashamed of their in-dolent extravagance. I do not forbid pleasure and happiness; the real New York does not want extreme types of work-ridden men and women. But I would not have you and your associates hide behind the palette to cover your indulgences. It is not because of your foolish dissipations that you succeed, but in spite of them. I cannot tell you how firmly I believe that finer, more permanent work would be done by these same men and women if they would bend their first impulse to the disposition of their talents, instead of pampering their idle selves. Oh, I am speaking plainly to you, Philip, although you have thought me incapable of reasoning. These last few months have taught me many things which might be well for you to hear."

She paused, watching his set, furious face.

"Go on!" he begged sardonically. "Pray go on! Happy New Year!"

Tears came into her wistful eyes, and she flung out both hands appealingly.

"Philip, come to your own! It isn't too late. Don't let the others drag you down. It isn't too late, I tell you! I can't sit by and see you sink. And I don't seem able to save you. There is a chance for you to do the work God planned for you. Don't keep on the other way, Philip—let me help, I——"

"Luncheon, Mrs. Meredith." Cora peeped curiously at her mistress, who still held her hands outstretched toward the man's angry figure.

"I'm going out," he said briefly. "If any callers come, tell them I was obliged to go."

"Philip." The house-and-garden woman would have bitten out her tongue to have taken back those mis-directed truths. "It's—Happy New Year." She laughed nervously as she spoke.

"I will not be late," he answered, as though he had not heard her speak. "We are taking dinner with the Fens-ters, in Brooklyn, and they told us seven. Is that right?"

"That is right." Her lips trembled

so she could scarcely speak. "Good-by."

"Good-by." He threw on his overcoat as he went out the door. Turning, he glanced back at her, in amazement at her outburst. "Happy New Year!"

CHAPTER VII.

Philip came back at six o'clock—a cold, courteous Philip, whose eyes looked over and beyond Lois, and whose lips smiled mechanically during dinner.

On the way home they scarcely spoke. Lois was waiting for Philip to bring up the subject of their controversy. Philip was busied with his own thoughts. After dinner he handed her the studio key.

"You may as well change this room into a sewing place, or a guest chamber, or anything you like," he said lightly.

"What do you mean?"

"Simply that I am going to share a studio with other fellow artists. It will be easier to work in that way. There is no chance to accomplish in this place, and I'm losing ground. The exhibition is only four months away."

"You are going to have your studio away from your home, away from——"

"It is the wiser plan. Considering your views, Lois, and your candid manner of expressing them, it would not be pleasant to try working here."

"With whom are you sharing the studio?"

He hesitated a moment, and then answered:

"Tony Chevalier has rented a space to three of us. The Bensons and myself. Tony had a barn of a place."

She turned abruptly to leave the room. He followed her.

"I hope you are not going to be jealous—that you can comprehend the fact of comradeship in work alone?"

"No," she answered quickly, "I am not jealous; I do comprehend the comradeship of work. Of Miss Chevalier I know very little. If you choose to do this thing, I have no complaint. I am sorry you cannot work in your own home, that my remarks have made you feel like a prisoner, a butterfly under a

professor's glass"—the unconscious sarcasm brought a red into his cheeks—"but what I said I did with the one motive of making you realize that you were losing ground. If taking another studio, with other artists, will help, I am glad I caused you to take this step."

"But personally," he questioned, "personally you do not approve?"

"Personally I believe Miss Chevalier's influence to be bad. I do not think any fellow artist who wears diamonds given her by a married man, and who flaunts them before that man's wife, can possess a truly great mind. It takes a big mind to comprehend a big mind, Philip. Only small minds misjudge and attribute petty motives to the acts of a broad mentality. Perhaps I am mistaken about this woman. You ought to know."

"Well, this has been a Happy New Year," drawled Philip, trying not to show his anger, "hasn't it, Lois?"

The thud of a closing door answered him.

The next morning Lois watched her husband superintend his moving. He left several old canvases and brushes behind, and some of the worn-out trimmings. After the load of materials had been carted out, and he went to Tony's to settle, Lois wandered into the old studio, and gazed with strained, weary eyes at the lonesome, neglected room—the room which she had looked forward to seeing and being in more than any other in her home—save the nursery. Only a few worthless trifles were left, a broken chair, tubes of dried paints, a moth-eaten fur rug, and a dusty pile of soiled portfolios.

She opened the top one aimlessly. The pastel study of a gray-eyed, elfish child looked up at her, the pastel which she hailed with delight in that first newness of married life, so proud that Philip had remembered! He had told the movers there was only "rubbish" left behind, that they need not come back for a second load. Lois shut the portfolio slowly, the child's gray eyes staring at her reproachfully. By and by she closed the door and locked it. She laid the key on Philip's dressing table. Some time, thought the house-and-gar-

den woman, he may go back to honest work.

Philip did not come in for luncheon, so later in the day she dressed herself for the street, preparatory to calling on Patsy Wood.

Patsy was at home, so the woman in the frowsy wrapper said, but very busy. However, she would take Mrs. Meredith's card up, and she might wait in the drawing-room while she saw if Miss Wood was at leisure. After five minutes of sitting on a pink satin sofa with perilous springs, Lois was told by the panting landlady that Miss Wood was at home, and she might climb right up.

"Climb is correct," thought Lois, as the third flight was rounded.

Patsy stood at the doorway to meet her. The girl's pink color had faded, and her eyes seemed of a deeper blue.

"I've sort of adopted the bear habit of burrowing in a cave for the winter," she said, as Lois kissed her. "I like it, too. You've no idea what a beautiful rest one can have."

"We've missed you," Lois felt suddenly shy now that she was actually facing Patsy with the knowledge of her unhappiness in her own mind. "We've tried ever so many times to get hold of you. Your Christmas things were lovely. I never knew you embossed leather."

"I play at it," returned Patsy, settling her guest in the one safe chair. "Tell me the news—now that I've seen you, I sort of want to tog out and go forth. Like the bear, when some one tips him off about a new hive of bees."

"There isn't much," began Lois timidly. Then she took out the little red book.

"I think you lent this to Philip," she said.

Patsy took the volume in silence.

Presently Lois murmured:

"There—there was a poem in it, and I read it. Patsy, I thought you might care to talk to some one. I felt you were eating your heart out up here alone."

The other had found the clipping, and read it through with calm, dry eyes.

Then she slipped it back in its place, saying:

"I am not lonesome any longer, Lois. I am through with this episode."

"You mean——"

"I mean that through suffering has come real work. In the corner with the wet cloths around it is the group I'm staking my reputation on. If it doesn't win fame, then I—— But there is no other way—it must—it will! For weeks I stayed up here, walking the floor in agony, crying my eyes out, bruising my soul with useless reliving of the love of Dick Spaulding. Sometimes I thought I would kill myself, but only fools and cowards do that. Sometimes I thought I would follow him to Germany, and crawl to him, as such love as his demands. Finally I threw myself into work—aimless, wild work, anything to detract from the other. It wasn't easy at first, and I used to be afraid I was losing my mind. By and by the hard sting died away, leaving a tender scar which still throbs at some memory like this. But, thank God, it is only a scar—and it's healing!"

She rose and paced the floor, her little figure seeming to personify energy and redoubled ambition.

"I am telling you the solemn truth when I say that I never want to see Richard Spaulding again; I never want to hear his voice or touch his hand. He is dead to me, out of my very consciousness. If he were to beg me to marry him, I should laugh. For once, a girl's broken heart has mended!"

"And you kept it silent—you never whimpered——"

"Oh, yes, I did. I whimpered to myself without end. I went through all the weakening, depressing stages of self-pity which kill clear-sightedness. I punished my own helpless self until I could think of no more tortures. I tell you, Lois, when a great sorrow comes to any human soul, no one but that soul can work out its meaning. We cannot lay our burdens on some other cringing back, however willing to bear a double portion; we cannot take our woes to some higher power to be soothed. Each one must take his own problem and la-

bor in solitude. We must pass through every phase of suffering—the dreadful doubt, the black unbelief, the hysterical ranting of punishment for some one else, the dull, deadly languor that enwraps us and prevents progress. After we have lived through these, after the pain of each one has been sharp and strong and has lasted until we have battled it away, then comes the aftermath—the small, still voice—the life song.' That is why men and women who have lived and mellowed, who have faced life and death, and learned that living sorrows are worse than those the grave can bring, are the ones who take the lead, whose eyes see farthest, whose minds inspire others. It's all loving and suffering and learning. That is life."

"Is that success, too, Patsy?"

"Success?" The little figure turned in the direction of the group. "Success is much hard work and infinite patience, much suffering, and then more work, and perhaps a trifle of what some call fate and others good luck. That is success."

Somehow, there did not need to be spoken words to tell each other how they understood. The house-and-garden woman and the girl sat in sympathetic silence. After a little they talked commonplaces and personalities. Once Patsy asked about Philip, and Lois told her of the change.

Patsy's lips tightened, and she said:

"It will all come right yet. This is your time of dreadful doubt."

"You must come to me once in a while. I'll explain to the others how your work goes," Lois begged, as Patsy followed her down the dusty stairs.

"I'll come. I'll come whenever you want me. My fingers tingle to work some days, and again I have to rest and wonder at the things I did yesterday. I'll come, though. Always remember that."

Six weeks later Lois asked Philip if she might come to the studio to see the exhibition picture. Of late Philip had rushed away early in the morning, often returning after dinner in the early evening, fagged and tired.

"It isn't in good shape yet," Philip answered. "I'd rather you'd wait, if you don't mind."

"How is Tony's picture coming on?" Her tone was even, almost genial.

"Very good." Philip pushed his chair back, and reached for a paper. "You haven't done anything with the old studio, have you?" he said, a moment later.

"No; we have not needed the room."

"I see." He turned the paper over restlessly.

"Do you work better in the new place, Philip?"

"Yes, considerably. You don't get lonesome days, do you?"

"No, only for home. I should like to have you go back there with me soon."

"I can't until the exhibition thing is over, but you may go if you wish. The change might do you good, Lois—you look pale."

"Won't you go with me?" she asked earnestly. "Not just for a day? You called Deerfield your second home before we were married."

"So I did. But you were there then." He tried to say the words naturally, but they jarred on both.

The days passed uneventfully for Lois, who had ended the stage of "dreadful doubt" which Patsy described, and was beginning to experience the deadly languor which whispers to let go of all effort.

Tony Chevalier kept in the background, yet the house-and-garden woman knew that she, before all else, was the means of Philip's absence; that in some unfathomable way Tony had a hold on Philip and would struggle to prove the final champion.

Lois did not go to Deerfield. She still hesitated from returning without her husband, and as Philip would have frowned on Aunt Martha's visiting, she contented herself with sending dainty gifts and writing faithfully. Philip was always generous about money. He seemed to have plenty of it for all occasions, although Lois knew that he had sold only two pot boilers since their marriage. But Philip never talked

finances, even among his men friends, much less to thrifty Lois, and so the remnants of his uncle's once handsome fortune were wasted.

Two weeks before the exhibition, when Philip was working at neck-breaking speed, Lois asked again to see his picture. Dick Spaulding was expected back the first of the week, and Lois' pride made her wish to be able to tell him she had seen it.

"We can go up to-morrow afternoon. I'll come home for lunch," Philip said, after considering a moment. "Yes, the Bensons will be away—that'll leave the coast clear." Then Lois knew that Tony would be away, too.

She had been at Tony's flat before—in the first few weeks of her life in New York—but she noticed the change in its furnishings as soon as she entered. Philip explained very carefully to her that the four worked independently, each having a pass-key, each sharing an equal expense.

"Miss Chevalier has very beautiful things," she commented.

"Oh, yes, Tony has good taste," he answered carelessly. "Here we are—this is my corner; the other stuff is covered up. Well—do you like it?"

Lois gave a brief glance at the daub he indicated—a poorly digested bit of landscape done with one eye on the clock. It represented Philip at his worst, expressive of the careless, blasé attitude he held toward many things worth while.

"Do you like it?" he repeated.

"I—I don't know," Lois answered wearily. "It is different from what I expected."

"I gave up the idea of 'The Parting' some time ago," he went on hastily. "It didn't suit me—I haven't the temperament to do it. I'd show you the other things, but they're all put away."

Sick at heart, Lois suggested that they leave the studio. This was the picture upon which Philip risked much of his scanty reputation. Layman that she was, she knew the work would be credited on the debit side of the ledger.

Philip came home a few days before

the exhibition, and told Lois that Patsy Wood had made her place.

"She's done a group called 'Fame,' and there isn't a bearded critic or jaded artist in New York who doesn't bow down to her. It's wonderful, Lois! I saw it when it first struck the gallery."

"I knew, I knew!" Lois said, half to herself.

"I can't understand where she got the idea, where she got the strength to carry it out. It's more like a man's work. It's wonderful!"

"When does Dick Spaulding return?"

"To-morrow—he's late, as usual. You know, he's on the hanging committee." Philip's manner was a trifle nervous.

"Do you think," asked Lois timidly, "that you stand a chance?"

"No, I don't." After a moment he added lamely: "I planned to finish it carefully, but the thing is dead."

"Mr. Spaulding," announced Cora; and turning, with a flushed face, Philip greeted the traveler.

"Don't dare to run away, Lois," begged a weary-looking person who shook hands cordially. "I want you as much as I do Phil."

"I'm so glad you're back," Lois told him earnestly. "Have you heard——"

"About Patsy Wood? Yes. I haven't seen her yet. I'm two days late now. I've been at the gallery all morning." He gave Philip a meaning look as he spoke.

"You look badly," ventured Philip.

"I feel worse. I'm nervous; now strangely keyed up, the next minute down and out. Can't work. I drove the boys mad on our Rhine trip, and only got one good thing. How does Patsy wear her laurels?"

"Like a thoroughbred, I suppose. Haven't seen her yet. She's been a hermit all winter. Lois has called once in a while."

"She wanted to be a hermit," protested Lois. "She was working on this thing all along. And she knew it would win out."

"Win out? Ye gods! It's going on small photographs and endless postal cards. Heaven knows what all! Old

Weingarten is mad about it. He says it smacks of Rodin."

"If ever a girl deserved success, Dick, it is Patsy Wood," Lois reminded him gravely.

He dropped his eyes.

"Yes, she did—and she's got it coming fast."

Philip had left the room to answer a telephone. Spaulding moved closer to Lois to ask:

"Have you seen Philip's picture—the exhibition picture?"

"Yes."

"What happened to him? What has he tried to do? Does he think the world is a blind fool? How long has he had his studio with—hers? Lois, what does it really mean?"

"It means," said Lois, as she looked at him steadily, "that I have failed to keep my hold on him. That until Tony Chevalier voluntarily cries quits and finds some newer fancy, Philip is worse than useless. I have lost out—that's all."

Spaulding's black eyes glanced sympathetically at her troubled face.

"As to your losing out," he continued gravely, "the game isn't over yet. Keep hoping, keep loving. Lois, I've learned quite a bit, battling over in Europe this time. It gave me a new light on a very, very dark subject. And I felt myself breaking, losing the vim and vitality I used to boast of. I felt lonesome for the first time since I was a little chap and my mother died. I wanted Patsy."

"Did you?"

"With all the longing a man is capable of at such times. But she didn't answer my letters. And the last ones came back unopened. I'm going to try and win Patsy as she ought to be won. Will you help me?"

"All I can."

Philip returned, and went to a side table to pour out a drink of whisky.

"Here's to the exhibition!"

He waved a glass toward Spaulding with a forced gaiety.

"I can't drink with you, Philip; your picture is too awful." And Spaulding pushed the glass away. "I'm due over

at the gallery now. Come on, Phil; I can take you in my car. Good-by, Lois. I'm going to come for dinner soon—I don't care whether I'm invited or not. Understand?"

"I do, and you are. Will you be back early, Philip?"

"Yes; I'll phone you if I'm detained."

As they left the apartment, Spaulding said to Philip, with a peculiar tone of meaning:

"Lois hasn't seen Tony's picture yet, has she?"

"No."

"And when she does?"

"What then?"

"There is going to be hell!" prophesied Spaulding solemnly. "Hell! And Lois' way of raising it is something you have never reckoned on."

CHAPTER VIII.

The private view of the exhibition was Monday evening. Lois dressed for it with great care, her new gown of cream lace suiting her well. Patsy Wood came over to help her into it, and to tell her she didn't mind being famous in the least—it added a zest to life.

"You deserve it so," Lois whispered, reaching up to kiss her. "Patsy, I've prayed you would come out ahead."

"So have I," admitted Patsy briefly. "Lois, you look like an adorable young Minerva. Now you must let me curl your hair—just a little. You're frightfully pale. I don't like the dark circles, either. Some day I'm going over to Tony's studio with a mallet, and have the extreme pleasure of smashing all her choicest art treasures. Philip makes me tired with his working there. Lois, you ought to be a suffragist, or something like that."

Lois laughed nervously, and took up a hand glass to hide her quivering lips. Patsy changed the subject.

She went with them to the exhibition, Philip plying her with bantering questions about her new-found fame and Spaulding's return, to which Patsy answered with equal candor, and told

the price of her new gown with a childish delight.

"It's such fun to be able to buy just what you want, instead of 'something which will wear better and do just as well.'"

They passed down the reception line, Spaulding watching Lois' face carefully. Patsy gave him her hand for a brief second, and murmured a commonplace. As they strolled away, she was conscious that wherever she walked an annoying buzz of conversation followed.

"Miss Wood, the sculptor," "The new genius," "Mr. Spaulding's friend," and other epithets brought the red into her cheeks.

Lois and Philip trailed after Patsy and Spaulding into the exhibition proper.

"First of all," said Philip nervously, "we must pay homage to Pat's work. Lois, get out your bass drum and tune up with my tuba. Prepare—"

"Fame," the group which made the critics doff their hats, met Lois' eager gaze of admiration. It seemed wonderful to think that this was the finished work of that wet, bulky object which she had grown accustomed to see done up in wet towels in the old sky parlor; the product of Patsy's famous clay barrel, with which she had fed her famished affections.

Fame, a slender, subtle, slightly mocking figure, is about to crown her latest favorite with the laurel wreath. The mortal's face as he lifts his eyes to adore his goddess expresses the dumb amazement upon finding out that Fame was no different from other mortals, that in her face was mirrored the foibles and weaknesses which all men possess. The goddess is smiling back at him appealingly, afraid that he may wrench himself free, and tell other mortals this is true. Climbing steadily toward her slender arm is another mortal, waiting his turn to be taken to her soft bosom. His head is inclined toward a mass of dimly modeled bodies, all cowering at the Pale Maiden's feet. On the mortal's face is the look of vainglory belonging to the near genius, the look of personal triumph and superiority with which

such men gaze at the multitude of beginners.

Behind the white figure lies the body of her favorite of yesterday, his wreath bruising his brow like a veritable crown of thorns.

A silence came over the group as they drank in the symbolic meaning. Patsy, who watched Lois' eyes, urged them onward.

"It is—it is——" began Lois, in a breathless tone.

"Yes, it is," agreed Spaulding. "It is—and that is all one can say coherently."

"Then clear way for the rest of the idol worshippers," Patsy told them lightly, "and let's do the pictures."

Reluctantly Lois moved away, looking back at the tall, graceful figure, whose fickleness held one spellbound.

In the long, brilliantly lighted salon, the crowds of people walked back and forth. Tony Chevalier, radiant in a red empire gown, nodded carelessly as she passed them. One of the committee shook hands with Patsy, congratulating her warmly.

"First of all," said Lois, "I want to see the prize picture—the fellowship painting."

Spaulding dropped back a pace, but Philip strolled ahead indifferently. Patsy stood beside her as she came opposite the large canvas decorated with the green wreath and gold label telling it had won first place.

"Philip!" Lois cried eagerly. "You kept this all a secret—you did it as a surprise! I've been wrong, cruelly, brutally——"

"S-sh!" He was beside her instantly. "Miss Chevalier is to be congratulated, don't you think?"

The color died out of her cheeks, and she looked at Patsy in bewilderment. "Tony—Miss Chevalier—why—why——"

"We are all surprised at Tony," Patsy interrupted. "It's very good work." She was trying to shield Lois from Spaulding's scrutiny.

Lois stared at the canvas. "The Parting" was the name on the label. Tony's signature was in the lower left

corner. "The Parting"—the picture of the man and woman, the painting Philip and she had talked over so many, many months ago. His picture, her picture—their picture. Every stroke of the brush, every line of the figures betrayed whose mind had planned it; every subtle bit of shading and line work, the fresh tints, the background—it was Philip's work; it was his brain he had given to the other.

"My picture is at the end—it's badly hung. Wonder who skyed it?"

"It wasn't your type at all," Patsy remarked, in a commonplace tone. "Are you tired, Lois? Then take my arm."

The gilt frames danced and glided before Lois' eyes; she looked at canvas after canvas, was told this had an honorable mention, that was second, that was third; she spoke to strange people with polite, cold lips, told them she admired the prize picture so much, the idea was remarkable, that her husband was one of the artists who shared the studio room with Miss Chevalier, that she hoped Philip would not be discouraged and lose faith in himself—he might come out better next time; one never lost faith in one's husband—that was quite true.

People swarmed in and out; she remembered trying to count them. Some one handed her an ice and cakes; she ate them mechanically; she smiled at Philip, and told him she was ready to go whenever he was, that she was quite tired; she wanted him to take Patsy home first—she was sure Patsy wouldn't want to be bothered with Spaulding; she went out to the cab and shook hands cordially with Dick; she let Patsy wrap her cloak around her; she knew that the warmth of Patsy's arm was grateful, and she leaned back and let her husband carry on the conversation.

She entered the elevator with a monotonous tread, stumbling as she left it, and when she reached her own living room she sank down in a chair and covered her face with her hands, sobbing wildly. Philip stood by in awkward disapproval.

"I say, Lois, you're not well—you're tired. Don't raise a scene because I

didn't win out. I told you how it would be. I've been worried and harassed and——"

Her sobs were beyond control. Philip grabbed a whisky decanter, and poured some in a glass.

"Here, Lois, take this and get to bed. You're wracking yourself all for nothing. What is the great trouble now?"

He spilled the liquor on her gown as he tried to force it between her pale, shaking lips. Manlike, he drank it himself, seeing that she refused. Then he paced the floor restlessly.

By and by she said:

"Philip, I have something which I must tell you."

"Then wait until morning. Neither of us is fit for a scene. My nerves are on edge. I want to get away from hysterics. It can wait."

"It cannot wait."

"Very well," he answered indifferently. "Only I'm in no patient humor. You say it at your own risk. Make it short, will you?"

"Why have you done this?"

"Done what?"

"Don't hedge!" Her tone was commanding. "How did you dare to cheat yourself? You know what I mean. Oh, don't play the coward and prolong this. Do you think I am a fool that I did not recognize whose talent was in 'The Parting'—that I was not conscious the moment I saw it whose brain had planned it, whose hands helped execute it? Our picture! And that woman takes the reward! Philip, had you sold my body to another man you could not have desecrated our relationship more!"

"I will not listen to your ravings—you cannot understand. I told you I had not the temperament to do that thing—she had. I helped, yes. She needed help. Would you have me hinder a fellow worker?"

"It was not helping; it was thieving. It was a steady, premeditated drain of your vitality. I know that woman. For months she has worked to gain the upper hand; she has gradually, subtly gripped you in her spell; you were powerless to resist. Did I criticize, upbraid, suspect you? Did I try to inter-

fere, to influence you? I have waited alone, always alone, hoping for your eyes to open, hoping you would come into your own, that your dulled perceptions would sharpen into intuitive aloofness. But I never dreamed of this—not this! And you don't care. You—don't—care! That cuts the hardest. You think yourself injured because you stand listening to my protest. You don't even care. Philip, have you lost all feeling, all sense of justice, save through her dictates?"

"This is nonsense! I will not answer such an accusation."

"You cannot. Your face condemns you. There is not a member of the academy but what holds you in contempt. There is not a friend but what pities me. There is not an honest critic but what would tell Tony Chevalier she could never do another such painting unaided. The world is not a stupid world; it is only you who delude yourself. Have you never thought you should have told me what you had done—that it was going to sting to come upon that canvas crowned with laurel?"

"I am not cruel in a premeditated sense," he answered coldly.

"Philip, it hurts so! To see your indifference, to think of the abortive little painting poorly done and signed with your name! Then the other! I care so much. I care so much!"

"Have you finished?" he asked.

Lois dropped her head.

"Yes; there is nothing more to say. You seem like steel when I try to talk to you. Oh, these long, last months!"

"Right—these long, last months!" There was a crisp eagerness in his voice that was dangerous. "Since you have brought this to an issue—a childish matter, at that—I, too, have something to say. Though we can wait until to-morrow if you wish."

"No—please let us have it over."

"It is simple enough, if you consent. I want a divorce."

The whisky stain on Lois' waist looked like blood; she watched it deepen and spread. Philip's voice sounded far away, like an ominous roll of thunder.

"I want a divorce, Lois. Are you willing?"

"A divorce?" She formed the words with childish twitches of her lips. "A divorce?"

"Are you willing?"

Again his voice was far, far away, and there seemed to be heavy clouds bearing down on top of her head.

"Listen, Lois, let me make it clear to you. I have tried to be fair with you—tried to do what would make you happy. I have failed—you will admit that much? Our boy-and-girl affair ended disastrously. We cannot blind ourselves to our unhappiness. It's a miserable existence; it hampers both. I want to break loose. I am going to be honest enough to say so—you admire truth and courage, I believe. You can go to Deerfield, or stay here, just as you wish. I'll provide for you the best I can. I've run the gantlet pretty much on money, but—" He paused, waiting for her to speak.

Again those twitching, sobbing lips that said so much with their mute gesture.

"The—transplanting wasn't a success, was it?" she asked, in a lifeless tone.

"No, it wasn't, Lois. You see how it is. You can't care for a man who has done everything contrary to your ideas. The very thought is absurd. I can't—care for you." He stumbled a bit over the words. "I can't, Lois. Even if it hurts you momentarily, we're unsuited; we were never meant to be together. From the first, it jarred."

"Are you going to marry her?" Lois said, in the same tone.

"Yes—I am."

"Then, of course—of course, you—you helped her. I see now you should have helped her. It's all the same whether she—she succeeds or you. How stupid of me, Philip, to have never guessed—that. If you had only asked me before we went to the exhibition, it would have been so much easier. You see, I didn't know that you cared for her in that way. I didn't understand. Now it is very plain. You—you were quite right to help her—quite right to—"

Philip turned away from the girl's uplifted face. He could not look down into her eyes and listen to that monotonous, chanting voice—the voice of an old woman, weary and waiting for rest.

"Lois, it will be all right, won't it? You understand?"

Dragging one foot after her with a grating, maddening sound, she rose and crossed the room. Her heavy satin cape trailed after her. She laughed as she turned in the doorway to look back at him.

A brief scene flashed across the consciousness of both: A New England barn, a fainting boy, a crowd of terror-stricken children, a thin little girl with solemn gray eyes and gentle, protecting hands; a bleeding, fractured arm; and a frightened, black-eyed boy leaning over a four-poster bed and saying: "Lois, we'll go traveling with a real circus. You can ride all day long on a big white horse, and I'll be beside you so I can catch you."

And the shadow voice of that little girl spoke to the man and woman as she had spoken to the boy years before: "We'll catch each other!"

"We never thought it would be this way, then," Lois sobbed impulsively.

"No, we never did," he answered, sitting down in the low willow chair, his head bent in reverie.

She gathered the folds of her heavy satin cape in her hand.

"It is more than a broken arm this time," she said, passing out.

Philip left word that he would be back in the early afternoon, that he wished Mrs. Meredith would remain in to see him. Cora, who brought the breakfast tray into the little white room, gave her mistress the message.

"Thank you, Cora. If any one else comes, I am out."

"At home to no one?"

• She considered a moment.

"No."

Cora whispered to the laundress that Mrs. Meredith was ill.

"It's a dead woman she looks like," she said confidentially. "I never saw

such big, staring eyes and gray cheeks. She hasn't slept all night."

"Is it a quarrel?" asked the laundress.

"I think it's a separation," Cora told her solemnly.

By degrees, Lois dressed herself and opened the morning mail. She sent back a few tickets to charity affairs, and answered a business note. Then she wrote a long, chatty letter to Aunt Martha, telling her they were well and that Philip sent his love. She posted the letters, and came back to the apartment, where she ordered dinner and looked over the kitchen supplies. She mended a vest of Philip's, and one of her own waists. It was half past one.

"You needn't wait luncheon, Cora," she said. "I think Mr. Meredith will be downtown, and I am not hungry."

"It would do you good—a cup of tea?" The little maid waited shyly.

"Very well," she agreed submissively. Cora brought the steaming cup, and stood by to watch her sip it.

By and by Lois went to her room, opened the drawers of her dressing table, and took out a pile of old letters. One by one, she tore them into small bits. They were Philip's letters, written her before their marriage. She wrapped the fragments in paper, and told Cora to take them downstairs. Then she changed her morning gown for a house dress, and sat before the grate, waiting for Philip's return.

It was after three before the key turned in the outer door. Lois steeled herself to look at him calmly and to speak in a natural manner.

The night had left its mark on Philip also; there was a strained look in his eyes, and he moved and spoke with an effort.

After a moment's silence, he said, in a low voice:

"Have you thought of what you would like to do, Lois?"

"You mean—"

"About our separation. It can be easily arranged."

"Yes," she answered, her slipper tracing the pattern of the rug. "I have thought it all out."

"That is like you—clear-headed and sensible. You know, the whole thing has been my fault—a brutal mistake. I'm more sorry than words can say."

She lifted her head abruptly, and he saw that her lips trembled.

"I have thought it all out," she repeated wearily. "Do you wish to know what I have decided?"

"Very much. I will agree to anything you wish."

"Are you sure? Quite sure? Wait until I finish. I have decided not to get a divorce, or to allow any legal separation! I have changed my mind."

She turned her head away to avoid his eyes.

"You are insane! You cannot mean that! Lois, last night you said—"

"I have changed my mind," she reiterated steadily. "I will not permit a divorce."

"Why?" His teeth clicked together sharply.

"I cannot."

"You mean you will hold me prisoner—you will stay where—where you are not—wanted?" In his angered excitement, the words slipped out.

"I have stayed where I was not wanted for many months. That will be nothing new."

"Do you mean this?"

He came near her, his hands twitching nervously.

"I do."

"You realize the position? You realize that I do not love you, never did love you, never shall? That I love another woman, that I went to her this morning to tell her I wanted her for my wife, that she expects to be married to me in a short time? If you persist in this blind selfishness, do you realize what a hell our life will be? Do you know how I can hate? Do you want me to remember you with—loathing, to despise you, to think of you as the woman who clutched like drowning men do—and dragged her partner down? Do you fancy for a moment that this will stop my love for Tony? It will only deepen it. You, with your high ideals and your hairbreadth discriminations, you are helping foster an

illegal love. You can't mean this, Lois. God! You can't mean it! You must let me go free. I tell you; you must! I won't stay here! I won't look at you! I won't speak——"

He paced back and forth like a freshly captured, wounded jungle beast, turning abruptly at either end of the room, knocking books from the tables and rumpling the rugs.

Lois sat with her hands clasped passively in her lap. Presently he stopped his tramping to appeal again.

"I can't buy you off," he sneered. "I'm a poor man—very poor. My money has gone like the devil since I married. It cost a fortune to keep this place. And I couldn't exist here. I was stifled from the first. I had to go elsewhere to work. I'm a bankrupt. Now you know the truth. Do you want to keep me now—do you want to live with a pauper? If you hold to your statement, we'll live in rags; you'll have to do your own work, sell these things. Speak, speak, for God's sake! Don't sit there like a statue! Tell me you lied."

"I shall not get a divorce," was all she answered.

He tore from one length of the room to the other wildly. Lois watched him grit his teeth and clench his hands, and she thought of the snarling, snapping jungle beast caught in his own trap. Baffled, enraged, thwarted, he turned to her again, the same as the jungle beast lashes himself against the cold, calm bars of his cage.

"Is it because you dread publicity? The thing can be arranged quietly, I tell you. Is it because of Deerfield comment, your measuring stick of ethics? You need not go back there——"

"How did you expect to support your new wife?" Her tone frightened him; its quiet was dangerous.

"I expected—we expected to go abroad."

"On Tony's money? Have you let her get possession of the few thousand you did have?"

He turned away, his entire figure trembling with passionate rage.

"Lois, will you answer me for the

last time? Will you give me my freedom? I tell you, I do not love you; I will hate you if you force me to keep up this farce. I cannot live in the same house as you!"

"I shall not give you your freedom."

She arose, and started to leave the room.

"You mean," he gasped, "that you will force me to stay here—that——"

"I mean," she said steadily, every word telling, "I mean to continue to be your wife. I am willing to give up every luxury. They never made me happy, Philip. I wonder at your cad-dish idea in taking Tony's money to live on, even if you gave her the money in fits of impulse."

"It was only until I made my mark."

"I shall stay here, or in other rooms, if you choose. I shall not give you any sort of a legal separation. That is final, unchangeable. Do you think I, too, have not considered this matter? Last night your sudden request wounded the vanity which every woman possesses; it drove it into a fury, and made me irresponsible. All night long, Philip, I have thought this out. I know I am doing the right thing. And I shall have the courage to carry it out. You may go back to Tony as soon as you please and tell her your wife will not give you up."

Philip lost his angered attitude. He stared at her in bewilderment, noting the sunken cheeks and the deep, black-ringed eyes.

"You are determined to stay? Determined—and you know how I feel?"

"I am determined. Quite sure that I know."

"Very well," he said sharply. "I shall tell her what you say. And I shall keep on loving her just the same. This will make no difference. Yes, a much smaller flat on the other side will be better. I had an offer to rent this yesterday. I'll take it. Remember, I am a poor man. Without a dollar in the world and a handful of debts. I had made other arrangements——"

"And you thought"—her eyes narrowed—"you dared to think that I would accept support from her money

—her money? Even if it had once been yours——”

“We may starve,” he said sardonically, “but it would suit you to have it end that way—if we were together.”

He brushed past her, and left the room. She heard him take his hat and coat from the rack and leave the apartment. Still she stood clinging to the drapery, laughing softly to herself. Cora, coming in, tried to get her to go to bed, but Lois held stubbornly to the velvet curtains, her hands as cold as ice. By degrees, she gave way, and let Cora take her to her room.

“You’re sick, Mrs. Meredith. You ought to call a doctor.”

“Not now—there is no use.” She shook her head slowly.

“Mrs. Meredith, you’re gray-looking and cold. Let me phone Miss Wood.”

Still the head shook wearily.

“Let me alone, Cora. I’ll be all right. I’ve had these attacks before, and I don’t know that any one else would help.”

Reluctantly Cora left her in bed, wrapped in blankets.

“God help me!” she said to herself. “But I’m thinking Mr. Meredith had better have shot her decently!”

CHAPTER IX.

The news that the Merediths had rented their apartments, and the best of the things were for sale, started a small scandal among Philip’s friends. First of all, it was noted that Tony Chevalier, basking in her recent triumph at the exhibition, had suddenly and without warning married a young Pittsburgh chap, son of a millionaire. The bridegroom in question, being scarcely out of his swaddling clothes, had hailed with glee the prospect of becoming husband to a successful New York artist. While those who knew the true story of “The Parting” sat back and chuckled, calculating on how many months it would take before the Pittsburgh child would realize that his bride could paint no more such masterpieces.

Tony had told Philip that she could not wait for him to argue with Lois, that

if he could not marry her at once, as he had promised, she was through with him, done with it all.

“I’ve spent every cent on you, Tony,” he begged. “I’m willing to wait a lifetime if you’ll only——”

“But I’m not,” she answered coolly. “I didn’t think Lois would let you go. She doesn’t believe in divorce—her theory is the ‘for-better-and-for-worse’ kind of milksoop. Well, I’m through—do you understand? I’m going to marry Billy Gorham, and enjoy the Gorham autos, and the Gorham bank account, and the rest of the trappings. What do I care—now?”

“I’ll ask her again,” he pleaded. “I’m going to move into smaller quarters. You know how my finances are, Tony. You know how I gave——” He checked himself, and went on: “Maybe she’ll tire of the change; maybe she’ll realize that a man doesn’t choose to make himself adaptive to a woman he has ceased to love.”

A strange, new light came into his eyes. Tony spied it.

“So you are going to try slow torture, are you? Pleasant old boy, you’re going to smoke her out! Philip, I can remember the time when such acts of devotion because of me would have kept me floating in mid-heaven.”

“Won’t you wait, Tony?” His voice was high and effeminate.

The girl’s face was hard, and she shook her curly yellow head vehemently.

“I’ve waited long enough,” she said. “I’m through. I want recognition. I want a home, a name, a position. I’d have married you willingly if the way had been clear, but never any indefinite ‘understanding.’ As for the money”—here she smiled tantalizingly—“after all, Phil, dear, was it so very much to pay as heart damages? And I was badly gone on you a long time ago. I shall not lie awake nights wondering how to get Billy to advance me the sum. You owed me that much, Phil. That—and the fellowship painting. For in spite of your recent, newly awakened love for me and your offer of marriage, you must admit that you once played me off

rough. And it's good when a girl these days can draw out of the game with winnings."

"Tony, is that final?" He could not believe she was speaking the truth.

"That is quite final. Go back to your house-and-garden woman and war it out. You must be a cheerful household these days! She'll have you back in Deerfield in irons, sitting in the pillory, and being hailed as the direct descendant of the Salem Witch family!" She laughed at him mockingly.

With a desolate feeling that he had mistaken the shadow for the substance in the woman he loved, Philip left her, and came back to Lois with an added sense of injury. For Lois had made him see the real Tony; it had been her fault that Tony laid bare her inner self. Not that Lois saved him from the shallow, worldly woman, but she caused him to experience cruel disillusionment. And another score was added to his list of wrongs.

Tony was married the next week. Lois, who read the account in the morning paper, smiled bitterly. "One of New York's latest finds." "Painter of the exquisite 'Parting.'" She crumpled the sheet in her hand. Tony had not cared for her husband. She had given him scant time in which to make the way clear for their marriage. So far Lois had been right. Did she dare to persevere? Would her endurance permit such a feat? The hatred, the contempt directed toward herself—could she stand it? The house-and-garden woman rose to look at herself in the glass. The grayish color of her cheeks assured her. Yes, her theory was correct. It would all come right. And she would wait.

Neither Philip nor Lois saw any of the purchasers of their furniture. A few simple things were taken to the new flat, which was on the other side of the city, in an apartment house affording no elevator. It was a back apartment, opening on a court where the gray soot drifted in monotonously.

The night before they moved, Lois wrote her aunt that their address was changed, but everything was going

splendidly, and she planned on coming home soon.

Patsy Wood dropped in just as she finished sealing the letter, Patsy having been away for the last two weeks and not cognizant of the great change.

"Where's Philip?" she demanded abruptly, dragging Lois over to the light.

"Out—at the new flat. We go early in the morning."

"So I just heard. Penhold bought the prayer rugs, and McGregor got the green breakfast set. I've been fighting off fame and pink teas all over the State of Michigan, and I'm peevisish. Lois, you're a little beast not to have come to me for help. Now, sit down, and ask forgiveness before we go any further."

"There isn't any need. Phil has lost his money."

"Spent his money, would be correct. I read about Tony and her boy. They are going to Paris at once."

"Spent, if you like, and we must economize. Philip—"

"Lois, can't you trust me enough to tell me the truth? Won't you? One time you came to me and asked me to talk, and I did. Won't you do the same? Do you know what people are saying about you two?"

Lois shook her head.

"No. Unkind things, perhaps; it doesn't matter. You see, Patsy, a long, a very long time ago, Philip and I were young and ignorant of each other, and we thought it meant we were in love. I took it all seriously, and I let him see that I did. So he helped me pretend. By and by, when things grew awkward, he married me because he saw I—expected it. You know Philip's father and mother and my father and mother were very close together. They were drowned coming from Europe when we two were little. We were saved and bound together on a broken spar. A sailor brought us ashore off the coast of Newfoundland. I had always thought it made us seem nearer than other children."

"So we married and came here. You know what a transition it was, how hard

I tried to be what he wanted. I couldn't help but see the shams, the petty frauds, the farce at working, and all the rest. I couldn't help but tell him I saw it. I had to sit back and watch him loaf, and shirk, and refuse to work, to see his money go, to know of the other woman's influence, to realize that it was gaining steadily. Then the exhibition came. Patsy, I think something snapped inside when I stood before the prize picture. When I told Philip I was not blind to what had happened he—asked me—for—a—divorce."

She buried her face in her hands. Patsy caught her and hugged her fiercely.

"Tell me where you are going," she said tenderly. "After you are rested, you shall come to me. I need you, Lois, we need each other. We can live together. I'm glad now for the money. At first——"

"I am not going to leave Philip. I refused!"

"Lois!"

"I refused. He wanted to marry Tony. He told her he would. When Tony found I would not release him she refused to wait, so she married the boy."

"Lois, you are not going to stay with a man who does not care for you; you are not going to endure his insults, and neglect, and——"

"We cannot understand each other, Patsy, because we are so different. I am not going to divorce my husband. It would ruin him utterly. I am going to stay with him at whatever cost. I cannot tell you just why—you would not understand. He would not understand. But some day you will both acknowledge that I was right. Patsy, this is the hardest thing I have ever done. It is the most cruel, crushing blow that can come to a wife. It crucifies her very soul. But I will not give him up."

"You are wrong, willful, stubborn, blind. Listen, Dick Spaulding has followed me ever since he came back. Last night he met me at the train, and begged me to marry him. You know what that would have meant to me once.

But last night I laughed. I will never marry him. In making me suffer, he has made me a different, stronger, finer woman. But I will not marry him. This is the attitude women should take toward such men. We crawl at the slightest flicker of their eyes. You must divorce Philip, you shall!"

"I shall not. We are two different women. I represent the old-time woman, you are the new type. I do not know what I would do if I were a new woman; perhaps start a revolt of house-keepers or go into politics to forget the sting. You forgot your heart in work; you cut away the bleeding flesh and replaced it with cold marble. And it is right that you should do so. But I cannot. I am as helpless regarding the course I am about to take as though Philip had never asked me for a divorce and we were happy together. I am a house-and-garden woman, as you named me, and I cannot make radical changes or departures. This is why no universal society of women can be formed for treating with women's questions, this is why we cannot band together to make common laws. There are still the two types of womanhood, and, thank God, I recognize my class!"

"I only know that my mother would have stayed with her husband, and her mother before her. Don't hate me, Patsy, or think I am weak-willed and useless. I have thought it all out carefully. While I cannot do splendid things in modeling or write books or act tragedies, I am going to serve my purpose. That is what house-and-garden women are for—to stand back of plastic genius and mold it into useful form. Don't look at me like that, Patsy, I cannot help what I am. If I should try to take your place I would fail, the same as if you tried to give your career up for the sake of love. Each of us has her sphere. Let us keep within it."

"There is no use in talking to you, Lois, only I know you are so wrong. What I think about your husband you would not care to hear me say. Will you let me come to see you?"

"If you don't mind I'd rather you

would wait until I send for you. I promise to send for you when I need you. I will keep that promise before long."

"Lois," cried Patsy roughly, "you're not well. You've got to come away. You've got to see a good doctor, and be scolded, and petted, and taken care of——"

"Please!" Lois begged, closing her eyes. "Please don't make it any harder. Oh, Patsy, just believe in me, you'll be the only person in the world that does. I believed in you once—remember?"

Patsy hesitated a moment. Then she squared her sturdily little shoulders and straightened up.

"Lois, I'll stay away until you send. Then I'll come and eat tacks, if you tell me to. If you're making a mistake, it's of Divine origin, that's all."

Lois lay in her arms, happy. She knew Patsy would keep faith.

The next morning, Philip went ahead to see that the van of furniture reached the new apartment. Lois stayed behind to give over the keys and close the place. She lingered a moment to look at the empty, deserted walls, the rooms once filled with dainty belongings, usually occupied by jolly people. She had come here a bride, new, and shy, and full of hopes and dreams.

The janitor's voice roused her. She gave him the key ring submissively.

There had been little said between Philip and herself, so little that each one remembered every word distinctly, remembered, and pondered over it, and harbored it up with resentful feelings.

The settling of the little flat was trifling—Lois put the studio belongings into the front room. She heard Philip go in to look at them. Then a key turned in the door. Again the work-room was locked.

Lois' room looked into the court, as did the rest. It was away from the other four. Only the simpler pieces of furniture had been saved. Philip's lips curled with scorn as he stalked through the rooms and saw their contents.

"You know, of course," he told her, "I shall eat out; I shall work at Wolf's

studio. I may have to do lithograph things. I shall not stay here—that's certain."

And the house-and-garden woman, with a wave of doubt and self-depreciation, wondered if she had failed, if Patsy's stand would be the better way?

Two weeks later, Philip, having come in and out at strange hours, looking wild and disheveled, Lois fainted away on the back stairs. The languid, unexpected spring weather had swept in on them, penetrating every corner of the apartment. Lois had been unused to housework for many months, and added to the breach with Philip, every step was an extra drag.

When Philip came home at eight o'clock, he found lights burning in four of the five rooms, and a strange, gray-haired, ferret-eyed man sitting beside Lois' bed holding her hand and looking grave.

"Mr. Meredith?" he said curtly.

Philip nodded.

"I'd like to have you fill this prescription—this way, please." And Philip found himself following the gray-haired man meekly.

"Know anything about your wife's family?" the doctor asked him as soon as they were in the outside hall.

"What do you mean?"

"Any cancer cases?"

Philip started.

"None that I heard of. Why—why?"

"She'll die," said the doctor grimly. "Get this filled, and have some one stay with her. She needs watching. If she has a second turn like this last she'll have to be operated on."

A mist seemed to float over Philip's head. He watched it curiously. Then he said:

"How long?"

"Can't tell. A few months, perhaps. She's a baffling case. There isn't a specialist this side of the water that could help her."

"Is there no way?"

"My boy, there is never any way out. Get that filled, and stay with her—it'll keep her quiet. Every half hour, un-

derstand. You're not well-to-do?" His tone was kindly.

"No," confessed Philip, "but we are not paupers."

"She said you were an artist?"

"Yes," he admitted bitterly.

"Then you can work at home. You won't need a nurse. There wouldn't be enough for one to do. It's having some one here in case a new development sets in, that's all. I'm not sure about the case myself. She's baffling. It will be a simple thing to look after. Rich people waste their money on scare cures and attendants. Don't call me again unless she's worse."

Philip took the warm, kindly hand, and clutched it hard. He listened to the doctor's footsteps go down the stairs with a firm, even tread. Lois dying! It seemed a nightmare, a confused dream that was hard to waken from.

He went back to her room. She lay panting among the pillows—gray, and plain, and tired.

"Philip," she said gently, "you know?"

"Yes," he answered. "Oh, yes, I know."

"The janitor found me on the stairs, and sent for the doctor. I should not have thought of it. I paid him myself," she told him, with pitiful pride. "You see, it has been coming on for some time. I did not know what it might be." She paused anxiously.

"He said you would need some one here." Philip was struggling with his whole soul to change the disinterested, dead tone, to speak to her tenderly as one should speak to the sick, even though they are unloved.

"Yes," she panted. "I am sorry—but you must stay—or get some one." He did not answer. Presently she went on: "You have not enough money to—get—some—one—"

"No," he muttered, folding the prescription slip in his hand many times. "No, I'll stay!"

He left the room abruptly, and Lois lay back, tears streaming down the gray cheeks.

"How long, how long?" she asked herself, in anguish.

Returning with the medicine, Philip poured it out for her, in silence. She took it eagerly. The house-and-garden woman, like all women, was at her best when well and happy. Now, gray, and drawn, and weary, she was harsh to look at. She could feel Philip's scrutiny as he bent over to relieve her of the spoon.

"You needn't look at me, Philip," she said, with an effort. "I cannot be very nice to see. You always craved the beautiful, didn't you?"

"I will do my best for you, Lois," the man answered firmly. "Is there another physician you wish called?"

"No," she said, turning her head away. "No, there is nothing else to be done."

"I will stay here," he repeated, with a new strength, born of duty and renunciation. "I will stay with you."

She nodded briefly, a flicker of happiness crossing the wan face.

"I am glad, Philip," she said softly. "I am glad if you will stay."

CHAPTER X.

There was no telephone in the new flat, and Philip's friends were unaccustomed to making long pilgrimages to the far side of the city unless assured of proper welcome. Philip, who shut his eyes to the world outside, refused to read letters or the papers or to write; he stayed within the grimy house, nursing his grudge with sullen determination, cursing the fate which had brought him to such depths.

He was afraid to count the money he had left. In an almost incredible way, Tony had gathered every extra penny he possessed, and the old apartment had cost more than he realized. The first few days of Lois' illness, when every time he entered the room to give her medicine or food he refused to look at her, those first few days the self-pity and discontent festered deeply within Philip's soul. He would stare at his disheveled, tousled self in the glass, and laugh sardonically. He, who had been the dandy, the prince of good fellows, the man whom his set followed submis-

sively, to be brought to this; to an East Side flat, to a pauper's income, to a dying woman whose plain, gray face he hated.

At first he tried to deny he hated Lois, he struggled to convince himself that he did not hate her, he merely did not love her. But gradually he came to acknowledge, shamefacedly, that he abhorred the woman who lay gasping in the court bedroom, who watched his forced attentions with wistful eyes, and who tried to smile when he told her good morning in cold tones.

They knew no one in the building. The janitor crawled up occasionally for the rent or to ask if the screens needed repairing. Outside of the grocer and the milkman, Philip had no society. He would read old books with a feverish desire to forget the woman in the next room; he would sit for hours brooding over what had happened, wondering how long this was to last, what would be his next mistake when Lois was dead and he was free.

Then he would glance at the clock, and steal into the bedroom, with a grim face and set mouth, to give her what she needed. Lois seldom spoke to him, only when he questioned her. She did not try to keep him in her room, and when he would walk out with that unspoken relief at leaving, she would lean back in the pillows and laugh softly to herself—a wild, pathetic little laugh interwoven with a heartbroken sob.

Sometimes in the night—Lois slept poorly—she would stretch out her weak arms to Philip in the direction of his room, and try talking to him in soft whispers, telling him she still loved and believed in him. Yet when he came to her, she only spoke short, cold sentences voicing her immediate needs.

Day by day they dragged along, the early summer making Lois' gray cheeks grow ghastly to look upon. She did not try to conceal her ugliness, she lay passively on the white pillows, which emphasized the contrast. She employed none of the little charms that the most of women invalids do, the small, scarcely noticeable artifices which make the sick room attractive.

One day Philip started to post her weekly letter to Deerfield. He glanced back at her with a new impulse.

"Lois, you'd better see the doctor again—you'd better see some one else. We can't take one man's word. You must get a nurse."

She shook her head.

"There is no need—yet," she answered. "And you have no money."

Philip set his teeth.

"Then I'll stay," he told her doggedly.

"Thank you," said the house-and-garden woman.

Three days after that, Philip paced the length of the tiny flat with maddening, dragging footsteps. His head seemed to be reeling, trip-hammer pulses throbbed in his forehead. He could not, would not, stand this slavery. He could not endure the sick room; he would steal, beg, borrow the money to send Lois away. He was right in taking such a stand. She was irresponsible, crazed. He thought of half a dozen people to go to, yet the name of each one brought up some quick objection. He walked back and forth, back and forth, now treading lightly, now tramping with savage roughness, stopping once to give Lois her medicine and another time to lower a window shade.

"God, if I could stop hating her!" he muttered, as she thanked him.

He looked at himself in a small glass. A distinct line was across the hitherto smooth forehead, his hair had grown long and rough, and the eyes were still the eyes of the imprisoned jungle beast.

"I cannot stand this," he said out loud. "I cannot stand this!"

Lois gave a restless little cough. He put his hands over his ears to shut out the sound. He went to the cheap mantel in the box of a dining room to rest his head on it. It was thick with dust. His hands groped wearily along its rough surface. A metal something, cold and soothing, touched his fevered fingers. He raised his head to look. It was a key. The key to the forgotten, despised, renounced studio—the key to the work which lay deep in his heart.

He held it up before his haggard, worn face.

"I'll—work," he whispered. "I'll—forget—her."

The house-and-garden woman sitting up in bed heard a slight grating noise. She listened sharply. A door, a door that had swollen from the heat and had to be forced, swung open. Then it closed. The key was turned in it again. Everything was quiet. A flash of color came into the house-and-garden woman's gray cheeks.

"The studio!" she panted. "He's—unlocked the door!"

At intervals Philip came to her, and then dashed back to the front room. Lois wisely made no comment on the matter. As the days passed and the studio became his stronghold, she gave silent thanks that he was learning his long-neglected lesson. Day by day, week by week, Philip worked fiercely, passionately, goading himself on, and on, and on. Day by day, week by week, Lois grew weaker, more silent.

They lost all track of time—this man and woman who were so solitary, so alone, so divided. They forgot the calendar, and the glad summer season, and the fact that there were people in the outside world who were well and strong and fairly happy. The man, driven to work by mental torture and despair, kept to his dusty, meager studio without a lapse. The woman, sacrificing, wiser than the man might ever know, lay dying, listening to the sound of that long-neglected key turning in its lock, glad that she had held Philip to his highest self; even at the horrible price of her own love, she had bought the genius.

Philip went out at night usually to buy their small store of supplies. Not once had he wavered in his faithfulness to Lois, not once had he ever neglected her. Even in the midst of his painting he would stop to come to her promptly, to give her every care she needed.

It was one burning afternoon that Lois saw Philip was dressed with unusual care, a sort of careless caricature of the old Philip's immaculate grooming. Then she knew the picture was finished. And when he asked if she

would mind being alone for an hour or so, she knew that he was going to bring the outside world in to look at his achievement.

"No, of course I do not mind," she said gently. "Will you mail this, please?"

Without answering, he took the letter, and left. It was an effort for Lois to go to the studio, and force the door open. By degrees she managed to make her way through the maze of furniture and easels which almost blocked progress. And in the middle of the desolate, filthy surroundings in which Philip, the dandy, had worked, she saw his picture. "The Return" she knew he must have named it, a fit companion piece to his stolen "The Parting."

The joy of reunion, the pain of the long absence, the suffering, the strange, wistful patience were all told in the woman's face. The man, noble, full of higher resolves, repentant, humble, smiled down at the upturned face, and one strong, protecting arm touched the woman's dark head. "The Return!" The gladdest, bravest, finest thing she had ever dreamed him capable of; every stroke of optimism, every bit of coloring, every splendid thing in it had been painted in through suffering, dull, throbbing, incessant suffering, latent, insane hysteria, and a man's wild, passionate rebelling at his fate—suffering, yet the picture left you with the feeling of dancing sunbeams, of roses in the moonlight, of birds singing at sunrise.

Lois groped her way out of the room.

"My work is finished, too," she said loudly. "Now I—am—free!"

The man whom Philip dragged up to see the canvas was frankly dubious. He had known Philip before, and always had declared that he needed the yeast before he would be worth treating seriously. He came with him merely because it was a dull afternoon, and he disliked hearing Philip beg so piteously.

"You look like a savage," he said. "You're ragged and seedy. What's been your trouble? Drink?"

"No," Philip answered stolidly.

The man gave one glance at the canvas. Then he stepped back a few paces, knocking over the furniture recklessly.

"You've grown, Meredith," he said enthusiastically. "You've lived, man, you've——" He held out his hand impulsively. "You've arrived," he finished warmly.

Philip glanced at the little nickel clock. He must not forget Lois' broth.

"I'm glad," he said huskily. "I'm glad. I thought it was a little better than other things."

"Better?" said the art man. "I tell you, you've found success. Believe me, Meredith, you've got it coming."

Philip did not answer. He stared at the canvas with breathless, timid eyes. It seemed like some hallucination that these last weeks had punished him with.

"Where's your wife?" asked the art man. "She ought to be in on this."

"She's ill," he added hastily. "She's very ill."

"That's too bad. I see you've got her eyes in. The rest of the face is different. It's good, awfully good."

Philip started. He looked at the canvas in amazement. Unconsciously he had painted the house-and-garden woman's great gray eyes, copied them faithfully with a wonderful exactness. And he had painted to forget her!

"Yes, those are her eyes," he admitted, in a low voice.

The art man glanced around the room.

"You've had a hard row," he commented shrewdly. "You've been up against the cushion, haven't you? Well, that always brings results. Pretty different from old times. I don't want to keep you, if Mrs. Meredith is ill; tell her for me she has a husband to be proud of. I want to see you to-morrow, young man, at ten o'clock, sharp. Now, don't go gloating, Meredith. Good-by. I'm going to blaze the trail that every novice tries to coax me onto hereafter. Good-by, old man."

He ran down the stairs, shouting back cheery, flattering remarks. Philip stood listening, the dim, unreal feeling still within.

He turned to go in to Lois. He must

go into her room, and tell her what he had done. She would probably smile at him with that ghostlike, gray smile, and he would have to——

The small court bedroom was empty. The bed had been carefully made, the pillows, with their telltale little hollows, lay across the white counterpane. Lois' clothing still hung in the clothes press, and her small trinkets remained untouched on the dressing table.

At first, Philip thought it a part of the hallucination. But as he advanced into the room, touching the empty bed carefully, and looking at the letter addressed to him which lay on the table, he realized that he was free.

The letter was a long, carefully written message; evidently it had taken several days for her to complete it. With a dazed gesture, he tore off the envelope, and, sitting on the small bed, he read Lois' last words to him:

PHILIP: I have known always that some day you would put aside your folly and come into your own. How long before this should happen I dared not think. By what means I did not fathom until the great change came into our lives, until indistinct dislike crystallized into hatred and aversion, until common decency forbade your sending me to a charity ward.

Oh, my husband, did you never stop to think that in all these weeks, I, too, have suffered? Have you never realized that to stay here, dying inch by inch, listening to your impatient, bruised soul fighting for its existence, was not hard to endure? Do you believe I have been blind to your looks, your voice, your very presence, when necessity caused you to come to me? Philip, it is such a little while since we planned for our marriage, a terribly, tragically little while.

Every time I heard you pace the floor, grinding your teeth, cursing your fate, I prayed that some impulse would whisper that work would be your salvation. Every time you turned from me, it seemed that God would not keep me here much longer. I, too, have longed to be free.

I am going home. Going home to Deerfield as soon as you have done your work. I am going home to die. I want you to understand my last wishes and respect them. That will not be so very hard, will it, seeing they will be the last? If you try to see or write me I shall be invisible, blind. I do not ever want to see you again, to hear from you in any way. I am through with my part in your life. I will have served my purpose when this letter comes into your hands. That you have crushed me, broken me on

the wheel, may never occur to you. But that is of the least importance. In outstaying my welcome as your wife, I have been the tool through which you were driven to work. You could not evade me—could you, boy? And you never would have listened to the call of honest labor through any other means.

Each time I think over the past few months, I am glad it has been so, that I have had the courage to keep with you, to stay until the end of your weakness has come. You must not write me, understand? *You must not come to Deerfield.* It would be useless. Not that I think you would come because of tardy love and conscience—you have been rather raw, boy, do you remember?—but you might come because of some strange pride and sense of duty. And I forbid it. Once and for all. When it is over, when I am dead, I will have told them to send you word. Then you may come. It will do no harm, and, perhaps, you may care to see that the headstone is artistic; small things used to bother you.

But until that time, no matter how long, you must stay away. You will not need this urging, though, will you?

I have been plain, distasteful, revolting for you to endure. You would have killed me if you had not been afraid of your own soul. I have failed in your eyes as your wife. I have been, to your mind, the blot, the ruination. Perhaps you may not see my viewpoint, perhaps you never will connect me with your success, for you are going to have success, Philip, that is quite inevitable. You may allude to me as an "unfortunate episode," an "ill-advised attachment." I remember reading in the lives of great men of such incidents. I have always pondered over them. Whose word made them so? What right had they to so judge them? I have often wondered if there will not be a separate little corner in heaven for the "unfortunate episodes" in the lives of great men!

Later: Can you understand what I have meant to accomplish? Laugh, or sneer, or frown, or ignore, as you choose. It has been done. I have held you prisoner until Success claimed you for her own. Like the drowning man, you snatched at a straw in your efforts to save yourself. Your straw was a rusted key, and you saved yourself.

I have crept in to see the picture. "The Return," you must surely call it. It is well done. It is worthy. But why did you use the eyes?

I have sent for Patsy. She will help me get away quickly. Burn or throw away the things. Somehow I could not take them with me.

Forget me, laugh at me. So little matters now. Only the fact of our mutual freedom, only the limitless, boundless privilege of dying which so many struggle to attain. With me, I am content, secure. Good-by.

Lois.

He read and reread the closely written pages. He stared at the empty bed, at the closet filled with her clothes. A great, aching void suddenly took possession of his heart. She was gone. The gray-checked, hollow-eyed woman who had been his anchor, his millstone, as he fancied, was gone. He was alone—all alone. Mechanically he glanced at her table to see if the medicine supply was exhausted. She had not taken any of it. The thought flashed across him with keen alarm:

Lois had gone. He would never see her again.

He reached out to touch the hollow in one of the white pillows. How many restless, burning hours had she lain there praying that he stroke her head as gently! Success was waiting for him, the success he had panted and yearned for all of his foolish, turbulent youth, the youth that flitted like a drone from one flower to the other, too indolent to gather the sweetness. Success had come. He was sure of that. A hollow, haunting, horrible success!

Beads of perspiration dripped from his forehead, and he buried his face in the pillows. Harsh, dry sobs broke from his lips. Lois was gone. She had earned her freedom. This was her prison. Here she had lain, day after day, hated, neglected, tortured, waiting to rouse the man in him!

Success—the word mocked him as he tried speaking it aloud. Was all success built on such rotten foundation? Did all masterpieces hide some broken heart or crushed life? He sobbed on, gripping the pillows in his trembling hands.

He raised his head to stare at the ugly, iron bed. He tried to visualize the woman who had just left it. Her solemn eyes seemed to look at him triumphantly, her gray cheeks flushed in his imagination as he whispered that he had won out, he had learned the value of work, the endless toil and sacrifice of so-called inspiration.

But it was only his imagination. Lois was not there. He would never be able to tell her this was so; he must wait to beg forgiveness from a corpse. And

the bitter irony, the unbearable irony of his transformation seemed to pierce his very heart. Why had he not realized this before? Why do most men wait until it is too late?

Success—a bauble, a frail toy. They would crown him with laurels and laud him to the skies, they would tell him of his wonderful, God-given talent, his artist's sense of the fineness of things. Every compliment, every tribute, every honor would be a festering sore, a double-edged sword he would have to stab his conscience with. He must listen to them in silence; he must submit, accept.

And all the time her eyes would be looking at him sadly, her wasted face would be smiling as she had smiled these last weeks—it was Lois who deserved the highest guerdon man could give. It was cheating to take the reward. Yet he must keep on and on accepting praise, like a thief who sells stolen goods. It would not do any good to tell them. They would not understand. On and on and on. He would live to be an old man, every day would be a century. And he must not write to her or go to her. He must wait—wait—wait! He must listen at every strange step lest it be the message telling him he might come.

Philip dragged himself out of the room, back to the studio, where the bright, joyous figures of "The Return" smiled at him. The woman's eyes—her eyes seemed to grow cold and stern as he held out his hands to her appealingly. Thank some kind fate that he still had her eyes to look at. He had painted that—as if such gladness could exist—and Lois had gone home to die. Her return!

"God!" cried the man, in anguish. "I think there will be punishment enough in all the lonesome years to come—punishment enough even for such as I!"

CHAPTER XI.

Patsy Wood came to Philip after he wrote her. But it was a quiet, cold Patsy, whose scornful eyes and silent manner made him shrink from asking

about Lois. She merely packed away the girl's clothes and belongings, and had them sent where Philip asked. She looked at his picture calmly, tears crowding for room in her blue eyes.

"Philip," she said briefly, "I wish I could hate you. But I only pity you."

"There is no way," he began feebly, his lips trembling.

"None," she answered. "None."

"The Return" swept New York even more than "The Parting" had done. And every other sketch and idle drawing of the same artist made the critics quiver with appreciation. He seemed unable to let his work alone, he kept at it feverishly, earnestly, intently, deaf to all warning friends who begged him to rest. He buried himself in his studio, refusing invitations, new friends, or renewal of the old. The Hermit, Spaulding nicknamed him.

Alone, always alone, waiting for the word to come. Once he wrote her wildly, telling her of the success, of the bitter realization. But the letter came back unopened.

Another time he wired, but there was no reply. Always success, and money, and fame coming to him. He seemed marked for material gain. Always the hollow, empty feeling, the weary, lonesome longing to see her, to beg her forgiveness, to kneel at her feet and hear her woman's reproaches. Only the magic of his brush kept his mind clear. And every stroke seemed to form pictures—strange, mystical, half-explained things, which made men and women turn away with choked throats and a longing to reclaim their lost ideals.

There was never any explanation about the separation. Only Patsy knew the truth. And he thanked God that one woman could despise him. The rest babbled glibly about it, said "he outgrew his wife—naturally," and that "they were never suited." Salt to the wound, yet he was helpless.

Their wedding anniversary passed. That was the time he wrote her. The fall—the same warm, generous fall when Lois first learned of New York. Sometimes he lay awake all night, staring up at the dark ceiling, praying that

he might know soon that she was cold, and sweet, and dead.

He fancied she must be suffering on certain days; he had nightmares in which he would waken, to find his hands outstretched trying to gather her pain-wracked form closely. Then he would write again, and again, and again—and the letters would come back unopened!

His money was his shame, part of the albatross. He used to dream about what he could have done for her, had he not been so blind. Lois had always wanted a place in the country, a bungalow home with wild roses climbing over the doorway and little children laughing at the windows.

Only the glare of the city, the artificial atmosphere of the near-worshippers answered him. Only the blinding, beating pain that made him paint to forget.

"You taught me work, dear heart," he would murmur over and over again as the dull hours dragged on.

Still no word.

Winter came, Christmas, New Year—he relived the brief period of their life together. New Year—biting winter, it would be so cold back there. Had she furs, had she comforts, had she friends, what had they said to her, what had she said to them, had she shielded him, had she sacrificed even to the very end? He wrote again, but no reply came.

Fame, fame, fame! It stifled, choked, strangled him. He felt he would go mad if the false honors did not cease. The shadow for the substance!

He was numb, unfeeling, when Patsy came to him shyly, almost genially, one winter day, and told him she was going to marry Spaulding.

"He is sick, and alone," she explained. "He needs me. Philip, it is when people need you that you must go to them. Dick is broken. He is an old man." After a silence on his part, she said softly: "Lois was right. She stayed. I see why now."

"She?" he questioned eagerly.

Patsy nodded.

"She told me so long ago. I laughed, and blamed her. But she stayed. She

knew that love is before all else, that through love all else is accomplished. And she stayed, offering her love as the sacrifice for you. I see now that I, too, must stay with Dick."

"Patsy," he begged, "tell me: Is she dead? She promised me I could come when she was dead."

Patsy took his hands gently.

"Oh, you poor sinner!" she answered honestly. "I wish I did know. But I don't."

The day after Patsy was married, the wire came. It said, "Come," and was unsigned.

The train was late, due to a blinding snowstorm. It was dusk when the Deerfield Station was called, and, stumbling down the aisle, Philip found himself shivering on the rickety platform. One or two stray hangers-on eyed him gravely. He spoke, but they did not answer. Philip had forgotten that Deerfield did not know him as Philip Meredith, the artist genius. To their simple little world he was still the man Lois Carson had run away from, the man who had broken her heart. And they treated him accordingly.

He passed the graveyard on the way to the old farm. He shut his eyes, and looked away lest he see them digging a new grave. It would be so cold, so lonesome for her to lie out there now.

The stony look in Aunt Martha's eyes did not matter. He brushed past her gaunt figure eagerly.

"Lois," he sobbed. "I must see her! Tell me if she suffered—tell me——"

He was told to sit in the best room—to sit, and wait, and think. A hundred old associations flooded his memory, a thousand thoughts of Lois as he had seen her in this very room blinded his brain. To wait——

A soft bundle, squirming, wrapped in pink flannel lay in his arms.

"Lois left this for you," Aunt Martha forced herself to say mechanically. "She named him Philip."

The baby eyes, the wondering baby face stared up at his, the tiny, soft, new hand grasped his coat and tugged it, the little feet moved restlessly in their

restraining wrappings. A soft cry seemed to be an echo of her voice calling up from the grave.

"I never knew," he said slowly, "I never even dreamed—I never even knew."

"Did you ever ask?" The metallic voice was good to listen to; it was paradise to find blame, just censure.

The snow on his coat melted, and trickled down dangerously near the pink flannel. Aunt Martha would have taken the bundle away, but the man held it jealously.

"No, I never asked," he said brokenly. "I never—cared. I've got to live now, to live and make her son proud of me."

Something in the old, worn expression on his face made the New England woman's chin quiver.

Presently he asked feebly:

"When did he come?"

"Six weeks ago, just six weeks ago."

Ah, then the sharp mound he had accidentally seen at the edge of the cemetery was hers. They had placed no name above it yet!

He looked up into the stern face with faltering eyes.

"I didn't even know," he repeated aimlessly. "I never asked, I never cared, I never——"

The gaunt figure left the room. The man pressed the fragrant pink face against his thin cheek. So little left him, yet so much! It seemed a long, tangled road in which he had always lagged behind.

"Philip!"

The house-and-garden woman stood beside him, her voice trembling with forgiveness.

A house-and-garden woman grown young again through the love of her little son, through the knowledge that marriage brings other happiness beside the generally accepted doctrine of a harmonious union, a sane, sweet joy which comes to all women when they hear the first, eerie cry of their child.

A joy so strong, so radiant, so lasting that the passionate, turbulent love of men sinks into the background, and the realization of all which is to follow comes to the mothers. The realization that from the date of the birth cry neither romance, riches, achievement, nor gratifying of personal ambitions can longer be paramount. All interests are subservient to the soft bundle of pink-and-white flesh. And from the new standpoint of a mother all questions must be redecided, all standards of ethics overhauled. With this glad knowledge in her heart, Lois stood beside her husband and smiled down at the pink bundle, the house-and-garden woman's symbol of womanhood!

"You are not dead—you are not dead!" he kept repeating like a tired child who has been lost and brought home again.

"I thought there would be no other outcome," she said gently. "The doctor told me there could be no other way. But it was not in our hands to decide. The cancer was a scare—just a phase of my nervous self. I thought there would be no baby to leave for you, Philip. So I did not tell you. And I was sure you would not have—cared."

The pink bundle stirred resentfully, and the man and woman bent over it with guilty eyes.

"Then I waited until I was strong enough—to—stand being told——"

"Being told?" He burned her lips with his kisses.

"That your love was still dead. I waited until I could hear you say that, and could smile at you—with my boy in my arms."

He crushed her in his arms.

"Lois, you believe in me, you care, you still can care, can believe! You mean it, you're not——"

"Believe in you?" The house-and-garden woman smiled up at him, her gray eyes rippling with long-earned happiness. "I love you—my boy's father!"



The Little Maid

BY
Marie Van Vorst

IN the last seat of a pew in a Presbyterian church a young man sat under the open window on a June Sunday morning. A little away the buggies and the country wagons were tied under the shed, and he could see the horses flick the flies and hear the stamping of their feet in the heat.

The church, which had seemed a cathedral to him when he was a boy, was crowded; and the hot air, fanned by innumerable palm-leaf fans, was misty and odorous over the hearers' heads. The minister sent forth his tremulous voice with its message of Eternal Wrath. Later, Doctor Porter would more gently speak of Mercy.

Dave Brooke had listened to reams of good, stanch sermons in his youth. Then he had stealthily kicked the paint off the pew or counted heads, or flirted with Cissy Flower up near the pulpit. She had sat there in the Flower pew, within his sight, during all their childhood. From babyhood through little, sweet girlhood he had seen pretty bonnets, and smiles, and curls, and roses, Sunday after Sunday, until he went to Harvard and church knew him no more.

She had never looked more flower-like than on this Sunday morning. Her profile was turned to David; he could study her. On her leghorn hat lay a garland of country flowers whose pale tints made the only color in her dress. Delicately made, blond and fair, she

might have been a summer butterfly flown into the dark old church, settling for a brief space while Doctor Porter read:

"I am the Resurrection and the Life."

David had known her all his life. The night he left Preenville for Boston, eighteen months ago, he had kissed her; and his kiss on her lips, the kiss of mastery and ecstasy, met fainter kisses, timid kisses which they had frequently and simply exchanged since their childhood. When he was an old man he would say:

"I have loved her all my life!"

He was a big fellow, and the narrow pew was uncomfortable. His legs cramped, and he lounged indolently. He had come in late, nodded to the sexton whose wrinkles had danced in his friendly smile. No one else had seen him. Cissy did not know that he was coming home. She sat in the pew, her hymn book open, dreaming.

He had not written to her for five months. Was that why she was pale and thoughtful?

When they were little children, Cissy had gone away for an unwonted excursion to the sea, returning months later to Preenville, and she looked at her playmate, and said gravely:

"I know you. You're Dave Brooke, but you've changed your face."

Now what would she say? He did not suppose her innocent eyes would

read the truth, but she would see a change.

He had followed the sermon mechanically, hearing the warnings and exhortations, and they alone had power to impress him; only the rebukes caught his ears.

"'If a man die shall he live again?'" And, with the pessimism of morbid, self-accusation, the young man said to himself:

"No! Innocence once lost is lost forever!" And the gentler close of the old man's benediction fell on his ears in vain.

The minister gave out the hymn, and the congregation rose with rustling and alacrity. The long morning was past. There would be good noon dinners to enjoy, peaceful drives home to enjoy, and the restful afternoon to follow.

The Son of God goes forth to war.

Always battle and strife! Why are fellows given such natures and temptations? He did not rise in reverence, but sat, sunken a little, in the pew.

A goodly army, men and boys,
The matron and the maid;

In robes of white arrayed.

Cissy stood beside her mother in a dress of white, pure as the petal of a stainless flower on some unattainable height. David knew that she was human, loving, and real. This afternoon, when the folks were sitting on the porch, they might have the back porch to themselves, and he could put his arms around her, and tell her she was the sweetest little girl in the world. So she was, and he was not worthy for her to wipe her shoes upon.

"You've changed your face, Dave Brooke!"

It was not a new one to be proud of. Cissy Flower, psychically drawn to him, put her hymn book in the rack, turned, and saw him. Her face flushed like the dawn. She broke into a rapturous and loving smile. She would have flown to him like a bird had such a thing been possible.

During the last verse of the hymn, before any one else had left the church,

David Brooke smashed his hat on his head, stalked out, and walked to the farm where he lived, through the dust three miles.

When she came out of church in a tremble and flutter, she saw only the rustic young men she had long ago compared to David and found wanting. Cissy Flower thought she had dreamed. The sexton, folding his wrinkles one over another, smiled on her, and said:

"Dave cut out early. Guess Preen-ville meetin' house ain't good 'nough for a college feller like him."

"Seen Dave?" one of the young men asked her. "Went home 'cross lots. Ain't seen his folks yet likely."

She drove back to the farm in a dream behind the fat horse, and the persistent flies; and her mother's conversation droned in her ears.

"Law sakes, Cissy child, drive, or let me! Where are ye goin'? Pearl'll be in the ditch with us 'fore ye know it. There, gimme the lines. What did the sexton say about Dave? Be Dave Brooke home? Did ye see 'im? Was he jokin' ye? Git-ap, Pearl. Them flies is too pesterin' to the pore animal. Nets is no good. Wasn't that an upliftin' sermon? Half the time, though, I guess you was dreamin'."

So she had been dreaming! So she dreamed always! Ever since she had been born Cissy lived in the dream world, filled at first by fairies and dolls, her beloved animals, goats, and rabbits, and birds, followed later with vague fancies, and hopes, and pure desires, that made her heart flutter in her breast and her color come and go; and the horizon along the wheat fields seemed a gate right into heaven. When her girlhood was at its beginning, David Brooke, who had always been in her life, suddenly filled it. He kissed her, made her a woman, and she promised to be his wife.

"There's your father, Cissy Flower, settin' on the stoop in the broilin' sun 'thout his hat on. Said last week he didn't b'lieve in Jonah and the whale. Don't look like he b'lieves in sunstrokes, neither. Father! Father Flower! Reach out, Cissy, and hit that fly with

the whip up by her ear. It's drawn the blood, pore critter!"

Mr. Flower rose from his comfortable, lounging posture on the step, came down to take the horse, and helped his wife and daughter from the buggy.

"Sweat some, didn't she?" he said compassionately to Pearl. "'Most et up by flies, too, pore beast. Wonder how much good the Lord's day has done Pearl so fur. Must 'a' bin pretty hot for church, Lucy."

And Mrs. Flower remarked caustically that she didn't see as church was any hotter than the front stoop in the broil-in' sun.

Cissy went upstairs. She was glad that she had worn her prettiest dress to church that day, that her hat had not been spoiled by the shower last Sunday.

David had come home! She sat down on her bed. The scent of garden sweets, of big, pink roses and syringas, filled the attic chamber. Cissy had dreamed here, thinking of David; wept here after bidding him good-by; waited here for his letters in the months that he had not written; and with wisdom and patience waited until he should write, trusting him implicitly, incapable of dreaming in all her dreams that her lover should be disloyal to his promise. Now he had come home!

The midday dinner sent its invitation up to her room.

"Cissy, Cissy Flower! Bean't you comin' down to help your maw?"

She didn't want any dinner herself. Couldn't they leave her alone with her dreams? He would come at four o'clock likely, when the dishes were washed and the folks taking a nap. She arose, sighing, to lay away her hat and go down to help Mrs. Flower.

Toward six o'clock of the longest day of her life, when the clock had ticked out her heart, and its big voice and its click driven her from room to room, from window to window, her cold hands wiped away two big tears, and she ran down the path to the gate, wondering why she had not gone there before to wait for him. In the shade of the oaks it was cool as a dell, and the breeze stirred Cissy's hair. David's

mother was an invalid. No doubt she had kept him at home. He would come for tea.

Would he come at all? Oh, did it mean that there was something really wrong? The dreadful months of his silence began to assume their grave reality; and the fact that he had gone out from church without speaking to her meant something to her now at last. Was David not coming to her at all any more? God, that they both had learned about, who seemed to speak to them through the minister's voice and words, God wouldn't let that be!

Suppose David shouldn't come to her any more? How long would she have to live? She was eighteen. People lived terribly long these days. Grandpapa Beedle was ninety. Her eyes fastened on the path before her until her gaze blurred.

"There is the mill pond," she thought. "I need never live to be ninety without David."

When she saw a buggy coming around the curve to the evening light, her hands caught at the gate for support. It was the Brooke buggy; but old Mr. Brooke was driving it. She opened the gate, and stood holding it for him; and her pale face looked out through the dusk. She could not speak or ask him: "Is David dead?"

"Howdy, Cissy," nodded the old man. "Folks home?"

There was no tragedy in it excepting her heart. She let Farmer Brooke go up to the house alone. But after a few moments, when the sound of her parents' voices, greeting their neighbor, had died, she went back by the kitchen way, upstairs to her own room. It was filling with the twilight. Under her window, out on the porch, in Mr. Brooke's clear, nasal voice, she heard David's name. She went over to the low window, and knelt down by it, half crouching. Her father, her mother, and Mr. Brooke were talking together on the piazza.

"Where's the little maid?" she heard her father ask. When he was in a tender mood he called her that.

"Down by the gate," Mrs. Flower an-

swered. "She's went down to watch out fer David."

"Yes," Farmer Brooke answered, "I seen her there. Leave 'er be. I don't want to say what I've come fer before the girl. I've drove over to see you folks alone."

"Set down," said Mrs. Flower.

"No, ma'am, I'll stand."

The girl, crouching in her window, did not lean out to see the group on the porch. She only listened to the old man's voice.

"I've got a nasty piece of work here, Mrs. Flower and Seth Flower. I've come over to announce to ye that I feel like I hain't got no son." Mr. Brooke passed for a hard, reserved man, but not for an unkindly one, and he had been a good father to David. "That boy," he continued, "whose l'arnin' has et up all our savin's, for whom I mortgaged the land and the barn to send to college, he's a disgrace to me and to his mother."

The girl in the window quivered; but, lest she lose some of his words, she controlled herself. She heard him clear his throat and expectorate; heard her mother's chair scrape gently on the porch. Her own beating heart was against the sill of the window.

"I begin to guess that college hain't no place fer a decent farmer boy, Seth and Mrs. Flower. I wish to God I'd kept him to home!"

Cissy Flower heard her mother say: "Ain't you hard on youth, Mr. Brooke?"

And Mr. Brooke laughed hoarsely.

"I hain't begun to be yet, Mrs. Flower; but I hope to God I kin be!"

There was a silence, and it rang to the girl like a sound of the hardest quality.

David! David!

She heard her father speak, and she loved him for it.

"See here, Brooke, if the boy had anything to say to Cissy, why didn't he come himself?"

Farmer Brooke laughed again miserably.

"Why, he hadn't the face to show up, folks. He sent me."

Now she pressed hard against the sill, her face white as death, and peered over

like a morning-glory on a vine around a window. But no one saw her.

David! David Brooke!

The old man went on without interruption:

"He's made a reg'lar mess of his life, folks. Seems like a college man can do anything he likes up there in them halls of l'arnin'. He hain't educated himself as his maw and me had hoped; but he's gambled away at cards all the money we sent him—the money we got so hardily—and has been drunken, and wasteful, and idle. I hearn all these things; but his mother, she wouldn't b'lieve a word of it, and I sent for the boy. 'You come home,' I says to him in my letters, 'or I'll come over and fetch ye.' And he thought he'd better come; and, when he did, he hadn't a word to say for himself."

"Seth Brooke," Mrs. Flower cut in, "ain't you ashamed to come over here and talk agin' your own boy?"

"He hain't my son," said the farmer grimly. "He's my stepson, and his mother's spoiled him; and I guess it'll be the death of him."

Standing as Cissy did, now close in the window, like a white moth blown there and clinging, her hands holding to the curtain, she could now see the group below her; the two farmers, and her mother in her Sunday-afternoon dressing sack.

"Waal," said her father, heaving his body to and fro on his feet like a ship at sea. "Waal, Seth Brooke, I was a boy onct. Wasn't you? And I'd 'a' heap rather try to garden with natural greens than with highbreds. Boys is all alike. When David comes over here I'll talk to 'im. I'll—"

"Bless you, father!" breathed the girl, listening. "Bless you!"

"David," Mr. Brooke answered, "won't give ye the chance, Flower, to talk to him. He hain't comin' over here. He's went to Boston."

Cissy gave a little cry; but killed it in her throat, poor child! Otherwise she did not move.

"By gosh," said Flower, in a lowering tone, "ye don't mean to say that he's gone; that he's the kind of a felly that

you say, Seth! I don't b'lieve ye! How about my little maid?"

"Hark!" said Mrs. Flower. "I heard a sound, Seth. Look! Ain't that Cissy comin' up the walk?"

No. It was the alderbush. It always looked like a woman's dress or a ghost.

Cissy's white face peered down upon them like an accusing spirit's; like an *Ophelia* from the stream, as white and wild. Mr. Brooke continued in a lower tone impressively:

"He's gone back to Boston. We sent 'im back."

He dropped his voice still further, and put one gnarled old hand on his neighbor's arm.

"Of course you was a boy onct, Seth. Me, too. And I hain't no parson nor any angel; but Dave Brooke's a bad lot. He couldn't deny any of the charges I brought up agin' him. He's turned his back on us and gone—and gone from your little girl. Folks, he's gone back to Boston—to a woman!"

Cissy Flower did not move from the window where she had clung. She couldn't go down in the midst of them all, for they seemed to her far-away strangers—strangers from David and herself. She could not make her grief part of them, nor face that old man with his wrinkles, and his horrible voice, and his tidings. A smile crossed her lips, and lingered. It was the last light of girlhood that slipped from her face. Love and trust were there, loyalty and hope—and at that moment they all slipped away.

When Mr. Brooke had driven away and her father and mother were alone, Cissy went downstairs and out to them.

"Why, it's the little maid!"

Her father tried to smile on her, and her mother sat helplessly in the rocker against the wall.

Cissy, in the doorway, white as moonlight, twisted her handkerchief in her hand.

"I heard what he said. I came to ask if I can put up my things and go to Aunt Patience, at Waterford, for a spell, father, mother?"

She went slowly to her father, and he

took her cold hands between his and drew her to him tenderly.

"Can I go over to Aunt Patience's?" she repeated feverishly, with catching breath. "Can I go for a spell?"

"Yes, yes," said the father soothingly, "you can go. Speak up, mother."

With a cry, as if all the misery of her young heart were unloosed in it, Cissy threw herself against her father's breast and burst into tears. The old man held her against his Sunday waistcoat.

"Hush, my dearie," he said, distressed. "Don't cry so, my little maid. Mother, mother!"

But Mrs. Flower, hurt at the preference shown her husband and very much disturbed herself, had risen and gone indoors.

"Oh, father, father!"

"Hush, my lamb!" His gray head bent over her golden one. "Hush, my little maid!"

"David Brooke! David Brooke! You're a coward!" The car's motion had rung it all the way from Preenville to Boston, and now the trolley passing under his window clanged it out; but, loudest of all, the inner voice of his conscience told him: "You're a coward, and that's the worst thing you've been yet."

He sat in the room of a second-class hotel, where he had elected to pass the night. On the floor lay his valise, his hat on top of it, and he himself flung down by the table in a hopeless state of moral disgust. Over all, above all, deeper than everything and bigger than everything, the only sweet drop in his cup of life was his love for Cissy Flower. That was real. David knew it now, and it had been needful for him to go home and to suffer in order to find it out. Now that he had found it out, he saw how unreal everything else was, and how terrible to have discovered this too late.

By his side on the table was a siphon and whisky. He mixed a drink, and held the cooling glass between his hands. His stepfather had called him a drunkard. He was not more so than ten per

cent of his chums and classmates; but he drank too much and too often, and in a year or two it would be a fixed habit with him. He turned the glass.

Father Brooke had said he was a gambler. He played, with his chums and classmates, poker and bridge until the money his folks had sent him had all gone. His friends were better off than he was. David was clever and agreeable, a real man and a real sport, and he was popular. Country chap that he was, his set was the best in the university. He won in charm and affection wherever he went; and when yesterday he had seen the red barns toasting and reddening in the June heat, and the roof of his old home, he had realized that they were sacrificed for him, that they had sent him to college, and that he had been, in return for it all, a coward. Too proud to refuse to play and pay, he had gambled with his people's faith and his household gods.

During the time Cissy Flower had waited for him, he had answered the old man's charges and his mother's questions. David Brooke had realized what his conduct meant. He saw his stepfather lift his frail wife in his arms, and he bowed his head under the old man's words.

"This be what sons are made for? To torture their mothers? You're a coward, Dave Brooke. Now you be goin' over to break the heart of Flowers' little girl." And, as he held his wife in his arms, the old man's eyes had blazed upon David from under his shaggy brows. "God Almighty, I'm glad I hain't got no sons!"

The boy had waited until his mother came to herself, and had, in a moment of retreat before another heartbreaking scene, said to his stepfather:

"You go over to the Flowers' for me. Say what you like, I'll go back to Boston."

His father had been for turning him out of doors, his debts at his heels; but Mrs. Brooke had prevailed; and, though they had let him go bewildered and confused by his evil doings, he had with him the money necessary to clear up his score and to put him in the right with

his chums. After that, if he wanted to continue his college course, he would have to work his way through.

He tried to imagine what Farmer Brooke had said to Cissy. He had been shrinking from this question; but it wrote itself before his eyes, and he imagined Cissy as lifeless as his mother when she should hear. In what brutal fashion had the old man said what he wanted to say? Why, Dave would not have let a bough swing back and touch her when they walked through the woods. Why hadn't he gone himself? Coward! And the word drove itself home, and struck him to the quick.

Now that he was sure that he loved her solemnly, he could not bear it, or himself, either. He moved quickly and knocked over the whisky in the glass. The drink spilled. It cost a quarter, and his money was precious now. He sopped up the wet with a towel, and the room smelled sickeningly in the heat. He had an appointment here with the man to whom he owed two hundred dollars. He would order more drinks when he came.

David got his pipe, and lit it, and sat musing, self-accusing, grieving, with the picture of Cissy's face before his eyes; and he was in no condition to meet a sport when his creditor came cheerfully in.

He scarcely knew how he had passed the night. There had been half a dozen of the fellows with him, and the effect of the carousal was heavy in his eyes and in his head. He had tried desperately to forget Preenville and Cissy; but they were inexorable, and would not be forgotten. He realized that he must shift for himself, and that the reckless enjoyment, the pleasure of doing evil, had all gone from him since he had seen Cissy in the old church. There had been a revival in David; something like a sudden salvation.

He lunched alone in the general room of a restaurant much frequented by his friends, but on these hot days deserted. Homesickness was in his heart for the fields he had left. Over and over again the vision of the church and Cissy came

cool and sweet, and yet it was torture to him, for he had no right to refresh himself with it; and if he knew anything about a girl's heart, he believed that he had broken Cissy Flower's.

After ten o'clock he sat in a music hall in the last seat, much as he had sat in the pew of the old Preenville church, and listened to the numbers, hearing them indifferently, until a certain star, a pretty creature who went by the name of Rye Devine, came out in her scanty dress upon the stage and sang her song. "Let's be happy one more time."

She had made it famous, and the manager paid her one hundred dollars a night to sing it; and Rye Devine had hummed it to David Brooke more than once in her own rooms when they had been by themselves. This was the woman whom Farmer Brooke had heard about in connection with his son. The chorus girl saw him across the hall, and she sang to him with much success her refrain: "Let's be happy one more time."

The young man had thought her the most ravishing creature on the face of the earth; and if it had not been for his debt of honor, and that his reputation demanded that it should be cleared up, he would not have gone back to Preenville to answer the farmer's questions. He would have married her. Several times, after a good supper at her place, he had been on the very point of doing so. Now he heard her across the house: "Let's be happy one more time."

The song was such as entertain the music-hall habitués—vulgar, quaint, and with an enchanting tune to which the feet keep time. The young fellow folded his arms across his breast and looked at the singer in her scant dress. The colored lights, from red and yellow, played upon her as she danced forward to the footlights; and before his eyes the scene altered to the old church and Cissy in the front pew when she turned and saw him, and over the heads of the congregation the organ rolled its soft music, and above the orchestra of the Olympia there came: "A kingly crown to gain."

His eyes blurred. He heard Rye Devine's number out, and arose stupidly,

mechanically, taking from the usher a twisted note.

So glad you're back. Come around to my dressing room P. D. Q.

He tore the note into little pieces, which fell on the floor of the Olympia with the bits of programs and seat checks, and the outgoing feet of the audience trod upon Miss Devine's invitation.

He experienced in the next forty-eight hours an awakening such as comes sometimes to the old sinner after years of dissipation, and to some sinners comes never.

"Many are called, but few are chosen."

Even though he was too young a man to know it, David Brooke was chosen; picked up right then and there by his guardian angel, and set, spiritually, upon his feet.

He took the midnight train for Preenville that selfsame night, arrived in the summer dawning, and persuaded a traveling butcher to drive him over to the Flower farm.

The sight of the red farmhouse glinting in the sunrise, the barnyard calls, and the waking meadows singing with insects and birds, welcomed him as plainly as though they said:

"Dave Brooke's come home again to the right place; and it's a good thing he has, too."

The very dew on the grass under his boots seemed sparkling with cleansing beauty; and as he passed through the little copse when the butcher had dropped him, and he started to walk to the farm gate, a cobweb wet with the dew brushed his forehead and cheek.

He waited patiently down by the gate until five o'clock, when Mrs. Flower's bedroom shutters were flung open, the house showed signs of life, and the hired man came from the barn with milk pails swinging across his shoulders. He went around to the back of the house, and spoke to Silas Wise, the hired man.

"Why, bless you, she's gone, David Brooke." The man grinned on him, admiring and sympathetic. He was igno-

rant of the cardinal sins of David Brooke and the wild oats that handsome young man had sown. "Why, Cissy's went to Waterford yesternoon. Been growin' some, ain't ye, Dave? Like the city any?"

Waterford was thirty miles away by slow train. David had neither eaten nor slept. Silas Wise gave him a drink of fresh milk; and, without disturbing the Flowers, he took the meadow path to the junction.

At Waterford, David ate at the tavern, got a wash-up and a shave; and it was four o'clock when he rang the bell at Aunt Patience's door. She opened it herself.

"Sakes, boy, Cissy ain't been here! Come right in. How be ye, Davey? She ain't been here at all. Guess Silas was jokin' ye."

At six o'clock he was on the train for Boston, which he did not reach because of freight blocks until close to midnight. He went straight out to Cambridge, and walked up the steps of his boarding house where he had had his little room for eighteen months.

Mrs. Purdy kept a quiet, respectable lodging, where one of David's professors, who had known his stepfather, had chosen a place for the country boy. David's wild oats had not been scattered before this respectable door. He let himself in with his latchkey; his room was at the head of the first door. Mrs. Purdy had no other lodgers.

The house smelled cool and fresh, and as he had opened the door there was a feeling of security and rest, a sense of home after a voyage, though he knew he would not be able to stop here or afford the reasonable board and lodging; but for a short while he might rest among his familiar things. However, it was not for rest that he had come so quickly home; he had been drawn back by a singular conviction.

Mrs. Purdy, in a freshly starched cotton wrapper, her hair up in leather curlers, came out from her bedroom and looked at her lodger reprovingly.

"Mr. Brooke," she said, in her flat New England nasal, "your wife's upstairs."

He echoed the words in a whisper, staring at her, for she spoke to him solemnly.

"Yessir. She came to-day at noon. She seemed very tired, and I give her a little dinner. I don't take married men," she continued, in the same flat, reproachful whisper. "I do think you might 'ave told me, Mr. Brooke. You ain't been real square with me."

David put his straw hat on the rack, and was conscious of a great physical fatigue and a curious, uncommon joy. But he only said to Mrs. Purdy, with something like an appeal in his voice:

"I'll go right upstairs, Mrs. Purdy." And he put five dollars in her hands. It was a great deal from his little store. "For your trouble," he murmured, and ran up the narrow stairs.

He opened the door cautiously, slipped in cautiously; but his entrance did not wake the girl who, after a hot and exciting journey, slept peacefully on his lounge.

Cissy slept as profoundly as though at home in the dormer room where the vines grew up to her very window.

The light from Brooke's student lamp under the green shade fell all along her body. Her face and head were in the shadow; her hat with the pale flowers, her cotton sunshade, and her cotton gloves were on the floor by her side. Cissy wore a pink-and-white gingham dress with a turndown collar at her throat; and throat, and chin, and cheek, and curving lashes were all in the shadow. Her damp, fair hair grew low upon her forehead, and her hand pillowing her cheek, the young breast rising and falling with her even breathing, made a picture of the very dawn of youth and beauty. No sweeter one could come to a young man in his happiest sleep when he dreams of pure, young love—when he yearns for a mate. She was perfect, perfectly lovely, perfectly pure; and the fact of her journey to him touched him to the deepest part of his being.

He looked at her with a beating heart. He thought that she had been taken from him forever by his own wickedness, that he had lost all right to her. So he still thought; but the fact that she

was here was the greatest emotion of all. Then he thought of Cissy alone, and the late hour, and the woman downstairs.

He came softly across to her, knelt down by her side, and gazed on her as a traveler might at a star which guides his footsteps home, and his lips trembled and whispered her name, and she sighed and stirred and awoke.

Without changing her position, Cissy opened her eyes and smiled, and for one brief second, still kneeling, David looked at her without speaking. Her eyes traveled over his face, his changed face on which eighteen months had written their short, vivid life story, but on which forty-eight hours had written a more spiritual history. Then she sat up, and held out both her arms.

"David, David, I couldn't help coming. When your father talked it seemed as though I heard you calling me, telling me to believe in you, telling me to come."

He didn't offer to touch her. His face was working with emotion. Never had he dreamed any vision could be as sweet as this—Cissy Flower sitting before him with her arms open to him.

When he found his voice, already back in his mind was the word "coward," to spring on him like a beast.

"Little girl, I must tell you first. Cissy, I must tell you——"

The young creature shook her head with a gravity which made her more divine than any coquetry, and which, with her tender years, showed how true a little woman she was.

"Don't tell me anything, David. I don't want to hear anything. I never believed what I did hear."

He arose from his knees and sat down beside her on the lounge; but he did not even venture to take her hands.

"I've just been to Preenville to tell you. I got there early this morning, and you had gone; and I went to Waterford to find you and tell you, and you weren't there. Somehow something told me to come right back here, and I came. I've been a coward, Cissy, as well as other things."

The university clock struck twelve; then he touched her hand gently, as

though it were a flower on a shrine which he had no right to approach too closely.

"Listen! It's midnight. You mustn't stay here, Cissy. I must see Mrs. Purdy, and tell her the truth. She'll take care of you until to-morrow. She's a kind, good woman."

The blood ran through him like fire, and words of endearment, of whose ardor he had scarcely dreamed, rose to his lips, and he wanted to pour them out to this little girl, who had come without hesitation to find him, and who had called herself his wife!

Cissy took his hand between her own, and held it softly. She only remembered how they had parted.

"Aren't you going to kiss me, David?"

And he cried out:

"Why, I'm not worthy to kiss your feet."

She didn't seem to hear him, and murmured:

"Don't you love me?"

"With all my soul! God help me!" the young man cried. "And I've never loved anything else but you all my life, ever since we were little kids. You know it, Cissy. You know it. I've loved you all my life!"

He would say those words when he should be an old man.

"Just the same, I'm not worthy of you. I've no right to you."

But she put her hand over his lips, and she hid her face in his neck, whispering:

"I only wanted to know if you loved me, that's all. I don't care to hear anything else."

He strained her to him, murmuring that he would live to prove his love, and to show the others that he could be good enough for her; but she heard nothing of it all. She only felt his heart beat against hers; and, as it raced with his life's vigor and his emotion, and her own gentle heart fluttered under her cotton bodice, she lifted her head, and tenderly kissed his cheek, saying:

"I never believed anything wrong of you, David."

And he took her face between his

hands and looked into her eyes, saying fearfully:

"Every word, and more, was true, Cissy. The only thing you've got to do is to face it, and see if you can forgive me or not. But I didn't know how I loved you then, little girl. Now I know."

She didn't falter. Her eyes didn't change as she looked into his. She had bound her faith to him, and her very life, when he had kissed her the night he left Preenville. She had wedded him in that moment of passion; and for her, as it is with some women, there would never be anything else but David Brooke, no matter what he did. She murmured: "Kiss me, David;" and, with a cry, he caught her again to him; and there was as much of reverence as passion in the kiss he gave.

"Mrs. Purdy," he said to the good woman who came in at his request, "this is Miss Cissy Flower, from Preenville. We have been engaged eighteen months, and she understood I was in some kind of trouble, and she came on."

The young girl held her leghorn hat in her hand, and her gloves and parasol. Her sweet dignity had already impressed the lodging-house keeper when she had let her in, and permitted her to go upstairs as Mr. Brooke's wife. Cissy was rosy as the morning. The draft of love she had been drinking had brought the flush to her cheeks, and the radiance of the dawn of life itself shone over her.

"Will you take her with you, Mrs. Purdy, and take care of her for the night? We are going to be married tomorrow just as soon as the minister is up. You can go with us as a witness if you will; and if you won't, we'll go without you."

He laughed a little nervously, and took one of his landlady's hands, and Cissy took the other.

The woman looked at the young people, at youth, and beauty, and first love, as it had come under her old roof, where

nothing but agitation over pickling, and preserving, and tradesmen's bills had passed for years.

Cissy leaned over and kissed Mrs. Purdy's cheek, and David Brooke bent down and kissed the other, and Romance played havoc with her New England heart, and she led the young girl away.

Then David Brooke sat down alone among his gods, among the things that had been something like idols to him for these months in the opening of his young life. His few books, his pipes, the pictures on the wall, and on the table, too, of Miss Devine in her dress in which she sang her famous song: "Let's be happy one more time."

There was a little sheath of bills under a paper weight that had troubled him very much—he had money now to pay them all—and on the lounge were the tumbled pillows where Cissy had slept in confidence, and where she had healed his heart.

As he sat there, his arms folded across his breast, he meditated. If the burden of the future rolled itself toward him, the grave responsibility he was about to take in becoming a husband, in charging himself, poor as he was, with a young wife, David Brooke did not see the burden. No young man does. In love like this, on the eve of his wedding day, he dreamed. The past slipped from him. When he had destroyed, one by one, as he did presently, the photographs of Miss Devine, dropping them in small bits in his waste-paper basket, it seemed to him that with them closed his wild life forever. Fortunately for him it had not been so long or so wild as not to be easily closed. Fortunately for him as he shut that door another opened, and in it stood a fair, good woman, who loved him well enough to forget.

Thinking of her, praying for her in his heart, yearning toward her with every fiber of himself, he sat and dreamed, and waited for the morning.

THE MASCOT

BY
SAMUEL
GORDON



DON'T be long, Helen," said Tolmayne, rising from the dinner table. "I shall be waiting for you in the small sitting room."

"Not a moment longer than I can help, dear," she replied, with a smile. "But, you see, Mrs. Thomson wants instructions for our luncheon party tomorrow."

Leaving his wife to confer with the housekeeper, Tolmayne sauntered leisurely into the small sitting room. His face, handsome in rather a massive sort of way, had assumed an air of concentration as though he were struggling with a knotty problem. For a moment or two he gazed through the window into the silent West End square, among the stately houses of which his own was by no means the most insignificant, and then he drew the damask hangings closer together. Next he pushed an armchair nearer to the cheerily blazing hearth, and placed a velvet-covered hassock by the side of it.

On the mantelshelf stood a large photo of his wife. He gazed at it hard, and for some reason the clear, steady eyes that responded to him from the frame made his concentrated air turn into a frown. What the frown meant he evidently wished to keep to himself, for it gave place to a somewhat mechanical smile when presently his wife followed him in. He flung away his half-smoked cigarette and hastened forward to meet her.

"There it is, all ready for you," he said, pointing to the hassock.

"Ah, the usual stage setting," she replied brightly.

"Sounds as if we're going to do some play acting," he retorted, with a curt laugh.

"How can you say that, Guy?" she reproached him, seating herself and shaking out the folds of her gown in a rustling cascade.

He dropped into the armchair and drew her head within the crook of his arm. So they sat silent for a while.

"It's about a month since we had an evening to ourselves," he said at length. "How the world will thrust itself between us!"

"Only to unite us closer in the rebound," she replied dreamily.

"Ha, that's a good idea!"

They lapsed again into silence, Tolmayne gazing down at the shifting glints which the electric light, together with the leaping tongues of flame from the fireplace, painted on her hair. He tried to trace the half tones by which it metamorphosed itself from bronze brown into spun sunlight, and back again. He found it a most fascinating study. It almost held a moral meaning for him. That chameleonlike change was surely symbolic of the kaleidoscopic aspects of a woman's heart. Did they ever allow any one to know them? Did they ever know themselves?

The problem he had frowned at his wife's photo rose up, more insistent than

ever, clamoring for solution. He knew it was very foolish of him; he should take the goods the gods had sent him, not look a gift horse in the mouth. And just because he knew he could not be stoically wise.

She suddenly lifted her head with a glance of trepidant inquiry at his silence. It stung him. It seemed to show that she had reason to be afraid of his thoughts.

"I was thinking," he said slowly, "that if anybody had told me a year ago we should be man and wife to-day, I should have said that—he was possessed of an exceedingly strong imagination."

"I wish you wouldn't harp on that," she said faintly.

He focused her face with sidelong furtiveness.

"Why not? Some old fossil of a poet has said that there is nothing so pleasant as to look back on the dangers we have escaped, on the misfortunes which—well, through which we have come the right side up. Helen, what do you think it would have meant for me, the misfortune of losing you?"

"But you haven't lost me, Guy."

"That's why I'm never tired of telling myself so. It's music to my ears." The purposeful look deepened in his eyes, the hard ring in his voice became more metallic. "Come, we'll let that old fossil of a poet have his way just once more, shall we?"

She folded her hands in her lap with a gesture of resignation.

"Let's see," he resumed, in a quiet, almost soliloquizing strain. "How did it all happen? I left you four years ago as your affianced lover, secure in the knowledge that I had taken with me your heart—by far the most valuable part of my luggage. I thought my journey would only mean a separation of months. I shouldn't have gone at all had I dreamed it would be so much more. I saw what awaited me the first day I got to Melbourne. It's true, my uncle's will had made me half a millionaire; but at the start it was merely on paper. I stood aghast at the hopeless muddle in which the huge estate had been left. Everything was absolutely

topsy-turvy; and to realize his immense assets was just like building up his fortune from the very beginning. It took me a year before things looked like ever getting straight; and just as light began to dawn upon the chaos, comes your letter to tell me that, for all the joy I was to get out of it, I had toiled for nothing."

"Yes, my letter," she interposed vaguely.

"It was a very nice letter as far as it went. How could you ever be anything but nice even when you are horrid?" he continued, with a strained smile. "But it knocked me over. What was the good of all the money in the world without you to share it? Oh, the dumb agony of those two years, the heart-racking effort to forget! I plunged into the seething whirlpool of life. I nearly doubled my fortune, hoping that I would crush my heart under the weight of my gold, and—just as I was beginning to feel the uselessness of it all, and was casting about for some other and quicker way out of it, comes your second letter."

"Throwing myself on your mercy, asking you to take me back," she broke in, with a kind of desperate eagerness. "You see, I had faith in you, Guy. I felt sure that, despite all, you would never change."

"It was that which touched me so keenly," he went on monotonously; "that sublime faith of yours. Many another man it would only have made furious. You knocked again at the door of my life as if you had never given me cause to shut you out. You did not even offer an explanation. Nay, more, you made conditions. I was to ask no questions. I was to make no attempt to probe the mystery of it. I was simply to accept your assurance that you had nothing mean or unworthy to hide. Well, I agreed, didn't I? You called me, and I came."

"Are you sorry, Guy?"

"Sorry? By all that's holy, no! What did it really amount to? You merely asked me to bury two unhappy years in the grave of oblivion, with all they contained of me and you; and

that's no great toll to pay on the happiness the future promises us. I certainly don't intend to let their ghost ever come to trouble us, if you don't, Helen." Again the searchlight of his glance flashed across her face.

She shivered perceptibly.

"Ghosts—graves—how strangely you talk, Guy!"

"Why? Isn't it the best time to talk of such things when the sun is shining, as it shines on us now?" Then his thoughts seemed to go off at a sudden tangent. Taking up the slender wrist that rested on his knee, he commenced to twirl the plain gold bangle that encircled it. "By the way—I wonder if we shall ever come across that mascot of ours again."

Her tense manner became tenser.

"I've still not given up hopes of finding it," she replied.

"I'm glad. Your bangle looks very bare without it. I should think that little Vishnu has been in our family for four generations, at least. I know my mother wore it, and her mother before her. I suppose, having been born in India myself, I have imbibed a tinge of Eastern superstition from some native ayah. I gave you the trinket as a talisman to keep our love safe. In a sort of way I was justified, wasn't I? Perhaps if you hadn't lost that Vishnu there would have been no need to bury those two years."

She sprang to her feet, trembling, almost palpitating.

"Oh, you drive things to extremes—you tear my nerves to tatters!" she cried.

"Do I?" He had followed her up, and caught her to him with a fierce yet penitent tenderness. "If I didn't love you so much—"

"Well, if you didn't?" she prompted him as he paused.

"Never mind," he said, with a laugh. "I think we had better start our evening all over again. We seem to have gone off on a wrong track—there, it serves me right. It looks as if we weren't going to have the chance. Visitors—I wonder who."

A long rat-tat at the street door had

come, muffled, to their ears through the intervening hall.

"I think that must be Clifford," she said quickly.

"Oh! I didn't know you were expecting him. Well, I'm glad. I like that cheery, inconsequent young brother of yours. I'll go and see."

She looked after him, her hands clasped, shaking her head with a blank hopelessness. Presently a slim young man bounded in, his handsome face clearly showing by its resemblance the relationship between them. It was rather an open face; and the air of conspiratorlike caution it bore at the moment sat strangely awry upon it.

"I've brought him, Helen," he said, in a whisper.

"Brought whom?" she asked, in surprise.

"You know, Ashley. I left him in the hall talking to Guy."

She changed color, and her lips strained for speech.

"You've brought Mr. Selborn—here?" she said at last.

"Goodness gracious, don't look at me as if I were mad!" came his aggrieved reply. "Didn't you ask that I should arrange a meeting with him for you?"

"But not here—not here," she iterated passionately. "I thought you understood that. You could easily have made some other opportunity."

"Upon my word, you petticoats are perfectly impossible," he exclaimed. "How was I to guess what was in your mind? All you said was 'Get me a chance of seeing Ashley.' I give you your chance, and—and that's all the thanks I get after hunting myself blue in the face for him all over the town."

"I'm sorry, Cliff. I'm sure it was very good of you," she said anxiously. "Never mind, if he's here, he's here. It doesn't matter."

She passed her handkerchief over her forehead where a few beads of moisture had appeared. It was as if she were making an attempt to wipe away the outward traces of her agitation. To some extent she succeeded, for she was able to turn an almost steady gaze on her husband and the man who entered

with him. If her eyes rested rather fixedly on the latter, his appearance warranted it. He would have attracted notice in any assembly, if only for those eyes of his, which, coal black and smoldering with a fiery gloom, seemed veritable danger signals of the volcanic soul behind.

"Helen—I suppose Cliff has told you—this is Mr. Ashley Selborn. I'm sure we are delighted to see him, aren't we?" said Tolmayne genially.

"How do you do, Mr. Selborn? It's some time since we met," she said, holding out a distant hand to the newcomer.

"Oh, you know each other! Why didn't you say so?" asked Tolmayne, his eyebrows raised in surprise.

"Charming of you to remember me," said Selborn to Helen.

It might be his fancy; but Tolmayne thought that a warning look passed between the two.

"We had no idea we should be honored with so distinguished a visitor to-night; eh, Helen?"

She made a vague gesture.

"Distinguished!" echoed Selborn, with a dry laugh. "That's putting it politely. Most people think notorious good enough for me."

"I dare say most people look askance at the views by which you have achieved fame—no offense, Mr. Selborn," said Tolmayne, improving on the other man's laugh. "I haven't had the pleasure of reading your latest—'Sex versus Church and State,' isn't it?—but there wasn't a single review of it I came across that didn't admire and vituperate you in the same breath."

"Well?" said Selborn, a challenging flush in his pale face. "That only means that people don't know their own minds. They revile and applaud me for having the courage to say things which they have not even the courage to think. Not that, between ourselves, it requires much courage to be a social pioneer; only just enough to take a stride into the next century. One forgets that the iconoclasts of to-day are the Philistines of to-morrow. Time and thought are their own stepping-stones."

"Hold hard, there," said Clifford,

with a guffaw. "This is getting a bit beyond me. Let's go down to the billiard room, Guy. I'll give you the usual fifty. Selborn won't mind." He followed Tolmayne, who had made his way to the cigar cabinet, and added in an undertone: "I'd like a word or two with you, Guy."

"Eh? All right! I'll be with you in a minute," replied Tolmayne.

"Not for me, thank you," said Selborn, refusing the proffered selection from two boxes of choice Havanas. "Another of my vices—abstemiousness."

Tolmayne shrugged his shoulders. The sarcasm sounded cheap.

"If you'll excuse me for a few minutes, Mr. Selborn, Clifford and I have a little business to discuss. His game of billiards with me usually means something more than that, doesn't it, Helen?" He darted a look of unnecessarily keen scrutiny at his wife, who made no sign, and then went on: "Meanwhile you'll have a chance of converting Mrs. Tolmayne to your views."

"If she still requires it," retorted Selborn.

Whatever meaning, sinister or otherwise, underlay the words seemed lost on Tolmayne. At least, beyond pausing for a moment, he ignored them, and walked quickly out. In the billiard room he found Clifford, who had preceded him there, chalking moodily away at a cue.

"Queer customer, that Selborn friend of yours," said Tolmayne. "Where did you pick him up?"

"I really forget. One knocks up against all sorts of people, you know. I say, Guy, fact is I'm in a bit of a hole."

"Well, what's Selborn got to do with it?" asked Tolmayne quickly.

"Selborn? Who said anything about Selborn?"

"I thought your bringing him here might—"

"Oh, for goodness' sake, drop Selborn for a while. It doesn't concern him in the least. It's—it's a woman."

"Oh, really? Well, out with it."

"Of course, you know Clytie Osmond, of the Orpheum. I mean, you've heard of her."

"I apologize to the lady; or, rather, I congratulate her on the fact, but I have not."

"Well, the whole trouble came about because I gave her a ring."

"Eh, what?" asked Tolmayne, with rather more interest. "Not an engagement ring?"

"Oh, well, it all depends what it's to be. If I give her a check for five hundred, she'll merely call it a token of friendship. If I don't—"

"She'll sue you for breach of promise. There's a bit of a baggage for you."

"Oh, not at all," cried Clifford indignantly. "Clytie is a very good girl."

"A good girl who wants to do a bad boy a nasty turn. Now, Cliff, don't be an idiot, and let her frighten you with bogies. She'll never go to extremes."

"But she's gone already. I've had a letter from her solicitor."

"The deuce you have! Well, then all you can do is to fight it."

"Heaven forbid! I'm as good as engaged to Addie Foljambe; and if there's any scandal, she'll turn me up as sure as eggs is eggs."

"But five hundred is outrageous. Offer her fifty."

"Five hundred is the minimum. She wanted a thousand."

Tolmayne began to look thoughtful. His business in life seemed to consist in getting this egregious young brother-in-law of his out of scrapes. Even if he wanted this young fool to bear the consequences of his folly, he could not for his wife's sake. He saw her sensitive face working as she read the reports of the case which, with Clifford in the witness box, would, no doubt, be freely punctuated with "laughter in court." The money itself was a bagatelle. But it was just as well to give the young jackanapes a fright and a lesson. He looked up, and saw Clifford's eyes fixed on him with pleading anxiety.

"Very sorry, Cliff. You must get out of it the best way you can. And, besides, you might win."

"Impossible! She's got some letters from me as well." He walked over to Tolmayne, his manner having veered round from sheer abjectness to a flabby determination. "Look here, Guy, you shouldn't leave me in the lurch like this. It isn't fair. You owe me something for the good turn I did you."

Tolmayne smiled.

"You did me? I don't recollect the occasion."

"I don't suppose you do. You never knew anything about it. It was in connection with Helen."

"Oh!" said Tolmayne, suddenly becoming alert.

"If it hadn't been for me and—well, one or two other members of the family, you'd never have married her."

Tolmayne had assumed an inscrutable look.

"Sit down a minute, Cliff," he said, suiting his own action to the words. "I'd like to know something more about that."

"Well, I'm not the sort of fellow to brag," said Clifford, with a great show of magnanimity; "but since you force me to it, and, you know, really, this Clytie business is a great weight on my mind—"

"Yes, yes," broke in Tolmayne impatiently. "You want your *quid pro quo*. All right. Go on."

"Well, you know, some little time after you had gone another chap came on the scene."

"Quite so. Another chap."

"Of course, I never thought it meant anything; but when I saw that things were getting a bit out of hand, I put my foot down. I must say that mother and Cissie helped."

"Certainly they helped."

"But the lion's share of the work was mine. I kept a sharp lookout on your doings out there, established reliable sources of information, and all that, and plied her with news how you were going up by leaps and bounds. I was at her day and night, telling her she wasn't doing her duty by us—that is, mother, and Cissie, and me; and, well, believe me, it was a bit of a job to get her to

write you that letter telling you to come back."

"Really? That's most interesting," said Tolmayne, his voice thin and keen like a razor blade. "And now, just as a matter of curiosity—how did you know I wasn't aware of all this?"

"Oh, from a conversation I had with Helen."

"Ah! By the way, what was the name of the chap?"

Clifford shrank back at the question; apparently he had not expected it.

"What's the odds who it was?" he replied lamely.

With a spring Tolmayne was upon him, and had fastened his fingers upon the other's shoulder with a viselike grip.

"Who was the other chap?" he asked again, his eyes blazing.

"I'll be hanged if I tell you," said Clifford, wriggling loose.

"You needn't. It was Selborn."

"How do you know?" exclaimed Clifford.

"Why, you've just let it out," said Tolmayne, with a rasping laugh.

Clifford scowled sullenly at having fallen into the trap.

"Well, then, have it your own way. It was Selborn."

"I was wondering," said Tolmayne, having somewhat regained his external composure. "So that's the link between you. It didn't seem to me that Selborn would chum up with you just for the pleasure of your intellectual conversation. He put up with you for the sake of your sister, eh?"

"Hang it all, Guy," began Clifford angrily.

"None of your tantrums, my dear boy. Well, having told me so much, you may as well tell me how he and Helen came across each other."

"I'm not quite sure," replied Clifford more docilely, but still chewing the cud of his indignation. "She was staying at some country place, where there was a big strike, and Selborn came down there to speak—I don't know whether for or against the men. Anyway, he got a crack across his head that laid him up for a couple of months in the village infirmary where Helen was one of the

honorary nurses. There had been a number of casualties, you see. And then, when Helen came home, he called on us in town."

"And how long did that go on?" asked Tolmayne.

"Oh, about a year—eighteen months."

"I see. In fact, until you succeeded in persuading her that a semimillionaire was a better match than an impecunious spouter, eh?"

Clifford shot him a hopeful look. The conversation was most fortunately harking back to the point on which his claim was based.

"You don't seem to think so," he said, in an injured tone; "but I was jolly useful to you over that business. Besides," he went on, in a more conciliatory strain, "I don't see what you're making all this absurd fuss about. What's it matter? She married you. If I thought you would take it like this I should have kept my mouth shut, even with a whole regiment of Clyties after me."

Tolmayne looked at him hard, and then burst into a harsh laugh.

"I wonder if you're really the ingenuous ass you make yourself out to be," he said. "Still, from your asinine point of view, you're perfectly justified in asking for—what shall I say?—your commission. I won't even pump you any further. There are a few things I want to get to know direct. You'll have your check to-morrow."

He walked to the door, and held it open. Clifford stared at him blankly.

"What on earth d'you mean, Guy?" he blustered feebly.

"You'll have your check to-morrow; but now I want you to clear out."

"Hang it all, Guy—what about Selborn? I've brought him, you know, and—"

"You may trust Selborn to me for a few minutes. Make your mind easy, dear boy. I won't forget that this is my house, and that he's my guest."

Clifford hesitated; and then, seeing Tolmayne's look, refrained from arguing, and slunk past him with a dubious, half-frightened air. The same silent procedure repeated itself in the hall as

Clifford made his way out into the street.

Tolmayne stood pondering for a few moments, and then slowly approached the sitting room. Pausing outside, he heard Selborn's and Helen's voices alternating in quick exchange; but the thickness of the door and the portière that covered it on the inside permitted no articulate sound to filter through, and saved him from the suspicion of an attempt at eavesdropping. With a sharp movement he turned the handle, and almost collided with his wife in the doorway.

"I was just coming to look for you, Guy. I've said good night to Mr. Selborn. He's been kind enough to excuse me. I've a bit of a headache. But I dare say he'll stay for a little chat with you."

Tolmayne envisaged her narrowly. He was not surprised that, save for a tired heaviness about her eyes, her outward appearance gave no clew to her emotions. He knew by now what an adept she was at the art of keeping secrets.

"Yes, I rather want a little chat with Mr. Selborn," he said.

He waited for her to pass out of the room, which she did without further ceremony to him or their visitor, and then he turned to Selborn with a boisterous laugh.

"Naughty man, to give her a headache! I expect your arguments have been a little too much for her; eh, Mr. Selborn?"

"I'm sorry to say that they have not been enough," retorted Selborn brusquely.

"It all depends what you have been trying to prove to her."

Selborn drummed the table for a moment or two. Then he faced Tolmayne provocatively.

"I believe you mean more than you say, Mr. Tolmayne."

"I know more than I knew, Mr. Selborn."

"Then why beat about the bush?"

"I'm quite willing to meet you in the open."

Remark and reply followed each other

like hammer blows on an anvil. So they stood, throwing each other into strong relief—the one a fine specimen of brawn and muscle, the other of them a tense personification of nerve and mind; but both exhaling in their respective ways an atmosphere of strength and self-resource. Both seemed conscious of it; and Tolmayne voiced their mutual impression.

"I think we are well matched, Mr. Selborn."

"I shall neither give nor expect quarter," was the other's reply.

"Very well, then," said Tolmayne. "In the first place, what was your object in coming here?"

"In the first place, to comply with your wife's request."

Tolmayne kept a steady front under the shock of the unexpected answer.

"Do you mean that she sent for you?"

"She did. Else I wouldn't be here. I knew, of course, that I could have made my own opportunity for coming here; but that didn't suit me. I was experimenting. I am fond of experimenting."

"I don't understand," said Tolmayne, his brows knitted thunderously. "I only know it isn't usual for a man to allow another to experiment on his wife."

"I waited to see if I had established a sufficiently strong hold on your wife to make her take the initiative. I am glad to see I had."

"Just to make things clear—may I ask what was the link between you and Mrs. Tolmayne?"

"Congeniality of temperament and views. Sir, your wife is a very uncommon woman. I don't suppose you have the slightest knowledge of her soul life. From what she said, she led me to believe that you and she hit it off in the ordinary way of domestic routine. She even went so far as to maintain that she was happy with you. But permit me to know better. She is satisfied merely because she has allowed herself to sink into a state of intellectual coma. She has let her sense of physical comfort—oh, there can be no doubt about the physical comfort," he sneered, casting round the luxuriously furnished apartment a glance of contempt—"to dull her into

the ruminating complacency of a quadruped at pasture; but the old, divine discontent is still there. The sacred fire we have borrowed from the eternal stars is still not quenched, and waits but the fanning breath to send it blazing to the skies. No, I am not disappointed in her. She is still capable of the great things of which she gave promise."

Tolmayne listened to him, gaping with astonishment. Then, when Selborn had finished, he banged the table, and laughed.

"If that's the kind of stuff you put into your books, I'm sorry for your readers. Man alive, can't you stop your claptrap and talk sense?"

Selborn showed perfectly unmoved under the other's outbreak.

"All right. I'll come down to the language you understand. I tell you plainly that I've got a stronger claim to your wife—we'll use the conventional term for the sake of clearness and brevity—than you have; and, further, that I'm going to assert that claim."

"My dear, good man," said Tolmayne, with forced quietness, "you're either off your head, or you're the most colossally impudent rascal breathing."

"I'm neither, Mr. Tolmayne. You see, I don't resent your descending to personalities. I'm used to them. You base your right to her on certain formalities you have gone through, the unimportance of which it has been my life's work to demonstrate. I knew she was going to marry you. I didn't make the slightest effort to influence her against taking the step. You may ask her if that isn't so. I was certain that, instead of taking her away from me, it brought us closer together. As it is, you only possess the less valuable part of her—her bodily self. Her thoughts are mine."

"You will pardon me," said Tolmayne, with icy politeness. "I think you said something about it; but I didn't follow you. To what extent does my wife agree with you in your sentiments?"

Selborn shrugged his shoulders.

"I thought I had made it clear. She

pretends that she is not quite ready for me. Man is a creature of habit, and woman more so. I suppose you have become a sort of habit with her; a rather bad habit, and one of which I shall have to break her. I shall try hard, Mr. Tolmayne, I warn you. I know that the struggle may be tougher than I anticipate. You have certain advantages over me which make you a rather formidable antagonist. But I'm certain that victory will be mine in the end. You see, I have already achieved something. I did not come to her. She sent for me."

"So you have already observed. There's only one thing more I should like to know, Mr. Selborn. What reason had you to think that I would sit here listening patiently to your tomfoolery, instead of taking you by the scruff of your neck and kicking you out?"

"No reason whatever," replied Selborn, with a certain bland simplicity. "I was ready for any emergency. Men of my school are always prepared for any amount of mental and physical rough handling. It's the usual fate of apostles."

"Apostles!" echoed Tolmayne scornfully.

"You shy at the word. I follow your meaning. You think that for an apostle I show an inordinate greed of gain. The world is accustomed to look on men of my stamp as altruists, who have no selfish object in view, whose motto is virtue for virtue's sake. You see, I don't mind in the least disillusioning you. I don't believe in the ascetic hair shirt, in a code of self-denying ordinances. I am as prone to the luxuries of life—the higher luxuries—as anybody. I work hard. I tread a thorny and a lonely road; and, when I come across something which appears to me an equitable reward, I grasp at it with all the rapacity of the original Adam that's in me. Such a reward for me is your wife. It may be hard on you, Mr. Tolmayne; but I owe a duty to myself as well. You understand, don't you?"

"Oh, perfectly," said Tolmayne, his face sphinxlike.

Then he made a bow and touched the bell. Selborn had risen to his feet, a

half-whimsical smile hovering round his lips.

"All the same, Mr. Tolmayne, I'm obliged to you that you did not employ—well, more drastic measures for bringing this talk to a conclusion. I've had some unpleasant experiences in that direction, and I'm not overanxious to add to them."

The manservant had appeared at the door; and, with a curt nod, Selborn turned and followed him out.

Tolmayne took a step or two after him, as if to stay him. Selborn's concluding remark had suddenly brought home to him that their whole talk had been futile. He knew from Clifford what Selborn meant by his reference to nasty experiences. Why, it was this very circumstance which was the pivot of his acquaintance with Helen. And he had let him go without asking him to define what that acquaintance amounted to.

And, again, was it necessary? So that was the wonderful secret for which he had eaten his heart out these last twelve months. Oh, the bathos of it! He had imagined that, at the least, it implied an almost organic change, some catastrophic revulsion in her nature; and instead it turned out to be a sordid flirtation, a philandering interlude—it was too ludicrous for words.

And then, all at once, he pulled himself up short. No, he was only hoodwinking himself. It was possible that the injury to his head had unhinged Selborn's mental balance. And yet everybody else took him seriously enough. It was mere self-delusion to consider Selborn simply in the light of a self-opinionated fool. Tolmayne felt that even more in the retrospect than in his bodily presence this man appeared the tremendous force which the world, however grudgingly and with shoulder shrugs, had acknowledged him to be. Beneath all his affectation, beneath the hollow-sounding fustian of the faddist there lurked a terrible sincerity. He might strut his stage like a harlequin; but under his motley rags he carried a poniard which he was ready to use in dread earnest for his own purposes. Wrong-

headed he might be, oblique of vision; but his path lay perfectly straight before him.

And so the torturing thought assailed Tolmayne with double strength: What influence was Selborn still exercising over his wife? What was there in his boast that he had touched chords in Helen's heart which would never vibrate to her husband? Tolmayne ground his teeth. Upon him had come a paralyzing sense of his impotence. There could be no doubt that both before and after his marriage his wife's dealings with him had been nothing but a sequence of cleverly dovetailed maneuverings. He was no match for her. To cope with her, he had only the wild, despairing fury that filled his heart to the brim.

Not to speak of the blow to his pride.

What a fool he must have looked to them, dancing, marionettelike, to their strings!

His eyes fell on a handkerchief she had dropped. Savagely he stamped it under heel. He might treat her the same way. He might crush her; but that would not restore her to him, would not give him back that part of her which Selborn vaunted he had apportioned to himself. And not without reason, it seemed. Things were washing back on Tolmayne. Yes, their thoughts were running in double harness. Selborn had used the paradox that what kept them apart united them only the closer. And she had said almost the identical thing—he had commended her on it as a pretty conceit. No doubt he could find other instances of the congeniality of which Selborn had prided himself.

But it was enough. Everything over and above was a waste of time, a waste of energy. The proper thing, of course, would have been that he should go to his wife and make a terrible scene. He would try to regain the self-respect he had lost by another method. He would show them in a more dignified way the contempt and nausea he felt for them all; for the jackasses, the hobby riders, the hypocrites—the Cliffords, the Selborns, the Helens of his world.

He would turn his back on the lot of them; he would return to the simple,

elemental life he thought he had left behind forever; to the clear, unequivocal skies that canopied the bush; to its air, clean and devoid of the rankness of hypertrophied ideas, of morbid and tainted emotionalism, of harebrained subtleties.

A gulping sob of agony and anger broke from him. He had trusted her so; and, in return, she had given him—Selborn.

Yes, he would book his passage to Australia by the very next boat. He would do it at once. It was rather late, past eleven o'clock; but probably there would be a night clerk at the shipping company's offices to give him particulars. He took up the telephone receiver—and then hung it up again with an impatient exclamation.

The door had opened, admitting his wife. He remained with his back to her. From the sound of her voice he could tell that she had paused halfway across the room.

"What has become of Clifford?" she asked. And, receiving no reply, she took a step forward. "When I left you here, I went down to the billiard room to find him, and—Guy, why did he leave without saying good night to me? What was his business with you? Is there any trouble?"

"Any more questions?" he said curtly.

She essayed a tremulous little laugh.

"What do you mean, Guy?"

"Because if there are, make a list of 'em. I'll write you the answers to all of them. I'm busy now."

"Write me."

She broke off, and made a swift half circle till she faced him.

"That's an odd thing to say, Guy."

"You may think it what you like. Excuse me now. I'm busy, I told you."

She sat down, leaning forward with one arm propped against the ledge of the deep-bottomed chair in an attitude of determination.

"I'm also part of your business, Guy."

"By Jove, you're right!" He laughed harshly. "The very worst part of my business. Great snakes, what a clever tease of a woman you are! You're

making me talk in spite of myself. Did you tell Selborn to come here?"

She sat up; and it gave him a savage satisfaction to see the startled perturbation in her face.

"I did, and I didn't, Guy."

"Don't quibble."

"I did."

"Of course you did. The chap may be a self-deluded charlatan; but he's not an intentional liar. And that precious brother of yours acted as go-between. Well, I paid him his—his fee, and showed him the door. That, I think, answers one of your questions."

She had become very pale. Then she said, her voice trembling:

"Guy, I don't know what you know or think. But, for Heaven's sake, don't jump to conclusions!"

"What, afraid I'll break my neck in the jump? All right, then, I'll go slowly, step by step. What was your reason for asking Selborn to see you?"

"You were the reason, Guy."

He stared at her, and then uttered a short, incredulous laugh.

"That's very clever. How do you make that out?"

"Guy, you know that Eastern trinket—the mascot, as you called it—you were constantly harping on it, you only mentioned it again this evening."

"Yes, yes," came from him impatiently. "I was pestering the life out of you about it."

"Selborn has it. I didn't give it to him. It had got loose from its ring one day, and I dropped it, and he found it. He insisted on keeping it. I wanted to see him to-night, or some other time, to ask him to hand it back to me."

"Well, did you ask him?"

"No."

"And why not?"

Her head drooped suddenly in a strange way, but she remained silent.

"Now, suppose I were to believe this cock-and-bull story of yours," he continued scornfully. "Let's follow the crooked workings of your mind. You didn't ask him because you were ashamed of me. When it came to the scratch, you didn't care to own up what a dolt of a man you had married. It

would have set my petty-mindedness into too glaring a relief against the transcendental grandeur of Selborn's ideas. It would have struck such a false note in your discussion of the eternal verities. Now, come, isn't that right?"

Again her only answer was a shake of the head and a wan smile.

"No? Well, if you had taken that particular view of it, you would have been grievously mistaken," he went on, his voice rising with a grim relentlessness. "Did you really think I cared two straws about a heathen idol? Mascot—superstition! Rubbish! Shall I tell you why the thing kept gnawing in my mind? Because it summed up for me those two buried years. When you wrote me to come back I came, just like a dog whistled back to heel. I had given my promise that I would not probe into what had happened while I was away, and, as in honor bound, I kept it. But we had made no provision against an accidental revelation. I was under no obligation to avoid that. I guessed that once the disappearance of my Vishnu was explained, I would put my finger on the pulse of the mystery. And I was right—you see I was right. That vanished mascot meant Selborn!"

Her arms suddenly shot out toward him with an imploring gesture.

"Guy, Guy," she waived, "I never loved anybody but you!"

"And that's why you threw me over; that's why you tortured me for two years."

"I tortured myself more. Guy, will you listen while I tell you the truth about Selborn?"

"Oh, I dare say you've got your yarn pat."

"I never regarded him as a man—I always thought of him as a mind," she went on, as though communing with herself. "Oh, I will admit that he influenced me. He awoke in me a latent spirit of turmoil and unrest. He sent me adrift on the tidal wave that is sweeping over the world of womankind. He made me doubt myself. He made me doubt my love for you. I began to waver as to my true mission in life. I grew uncertain whether I could be to

you everything you had a right to expect me to be. It was only fair to you to set you free until I had found myself again, until I felt firm ground under my feet once more."

"No, no, there must have been more than that."

"It's my own fault if I made you think so. I see now that it would have been wiser if I had told you at the outset."

"Then why in blazes didn't you?"

"You seem to think it would have been so easy. Somehow my whole being rebelled against letting you read that chapter of my life. Perhaps it was mere woman's vanity, a perverse feeling that you ought to take me on trust. But more truly, Guy, it was my abject, my supreme tribute to your power over me. I was afraid that you would not understand, as you don't quite seem to understand even now. I dreaded that you would not forgive me for letting another interest temporarily usurp your place in my head, if not my heart. I loved you too much to risk it. But, Guy, if you still care at all for my love, you should be glad of it. I have tested all the values of life, and I found that nothing counted save—you."

"Yes, and I think your relatives also helped you to that opinion," he said brutally.

She looked at him, puzzled; and then, as his meaning slowly stole into her brain, she rose to her feet, her horror and grief clearly depicted on her face.

"Hush, Guy! For the love of Heaven, don't put that thought into plainer words," she said, in a half whisper. "If you do, I shall give up trying to convince you. I shall let you imagine what you like. That is the one taunt for which I may not be able to bring myself to forgive you."

He slapped his thigh; but the ironic laugh to which he was about to give vent did not come.

"Oho, that's good—now you're turning the tables with a vengeance!" he cried. He drew back; and then again, taking a few rapid strides forward, bringing him close to her, he seized her by the wrist. "Be careful what you say.

So far you haven't done badly. You are making out a case for yourself. Don't you see"—his words rang with a passionate fervor—"that I want to be convinced, that I want to believe you? You have made a good many things clear, but you haven't explained Selborn; you haven't explained him away. Where does he come in? Why does he still maintain that he is going to play a part in your life?"

"I am not responsible for what he says," she replied, with tremulous eagerness. "I know he has a great belief in himself."

"Belief?" he broke in. "He's got the devil's own conceit."

"Call it what you like. Do you think that men would continue tilting at windmills as he does if it were not for their implicit faith that they can never fail, that every ounce of energy they expend brings with it a ton of success? He cannot—he dare not conceive that I am one of his failures."

"You should have argued it out of him."

"I did—I tried to," she answered piteously. "I tried to prove to him that I was fulfilling my womanhood in my own way."

"Then you must have argued very badly," he persisted.

"Perhaps I did. Guy, it's about a week since I asked Clifford to find Selborn for me. It's possible that my message may have given him a false impression. I did not know then what I know

now. During that week"—her voice dropped—"during that week, Guy, an argument came to me that would have shown Selborn conclusively how unnecessary he was to me."

"Then why in Heaven's name didn't you use it?"

"Why I didn't use it?"

She paused; and at her hesitation his doubts flamed up afresh. Was she still seeking subterfuges? He saw the color coming and going in her cheeks. He noted other signs of confusion, of alarm, almost, that marked her manner; and his fist clenched involuntarily.

"Perhaps you'll let me hear this wonderful argument of yours," he cried.

"No, Guy," she faltered.

"No?" he echoed hoarsely.

"I will tell you instead why I did not ask Selborn to give me back our mascot."

"Well?"

She fixed him with an ineffable look of dignified tenderness that mysteriously cowed and thrilled him.

"Because, Guy—because we have found a stronger, a surer talisman for our love."

She swayed perilously from side to side; but presently, with a great effort, regained her balance, and hurried blindly from the room.

Tolmayne stood looking after her for a moment or two, dazed and petrified. His hands went to his throat, and he uttered a cry as if he were choking. Then he swiftly followed her.

IN A FIELD

I RESTED in a field to-day,
 About me flow'rs were growing;
 I rested in a field to-day,
 Around me airs were blowing;
 I rested in a field to-day,
 Above me birds were winging;
 I rested in a field to-day,
 The universe seemed singing;
 I rested in a field to-day,
 And cared not what betide me;
 I rested in a field to-day,
 With some one close beside me!

HAROLD SUSMAN.

The Thrower of Stones



Margaretta Tuttle

THE Marquis of Chambault was a good swimmer, and to reach safety he had not far to swim; but any man's progress through the water is impeded by shoes, however thin and elegant; and even the most beautifully tailored clothes become an intolerable burden when they cleave to a man's skin in great wads of wool, and bind his arms and chest in the clutch of humped-up wrinkles.

Yet, even with all these odds against him, the marquis not only neared the shore, but he retained sufficient presence of mind to look about him as he swam to see if there had been any spectators of the appalling moment when the so large man they had called Delaney had half pushed and half carried him out on the Carson pier, fast held by a choking collar, and then actually lifted him by the collar, and tossed him like any dog into the water.

So far as the marquis could determine nobody had seen this frightful act; an act for which he called St. Francis De Sales to witness he would do everybody who had any connection with it irreparable damage of some sort, if he had to devote his life to it.

Delaney had disappeared in the wooded path that led up the hillside to the Carson house on the bluff. As the marquis reached shallower water, he once more cast an anxious eye on the shore. The difficult part of any fall that does

not actually hurt a man is to get up again without loss of dignity. This becomes doubly difficult with each added onlooker.

As the marquis' patent-leather-incased feet touched bottom, and he rose in water waist-deep, and caught a long and laborious breath, he suddenly delivered himself of a rapid and highly picturesque succession of oaths that only a Frenchman could achieve at a moment when water was dripping into his mouth and he was half strangled by lack of breath. For approaching along the beach as fast as tight skirts, and high heels that sank into the sand, and a well-disguised heaviness of figure would permit, Mrs. Morris trailed her lace flounces recklessly over the rock-strewn shore, calling to the marquis words of fright and surprise that he could neither understand nor appreciate.

The marquis stopped where he was, and spat the brine from his mouth and blew it from his nose. Then he once more broke into rapid French, cursing, with incredible violence, the so large American, who had reduced him to the condition in which he now found himself. He looked down at his clinging and wrinkling clothes that had so lately been the highest expression of expert French tailoring, and he shuddered. It was a loss these beasts should be made to pay. His hat and stick, too! They were probably scattered abroad, and he valued both exceedingly. And all the

while the widowed aunt of his once fiancée, Nora—who would have thought that silly chit of a girl could serve him such a trick?—stood on the shore gesticulating wildly and making foolish little speeches.

"Oh, marquis, are you hurt? Are you safe? How did it happen?"

The last sentence presently took the marquis' attention from his own plight. Felicitously the blond, plump aunt of Nora Jeffrey had not witnessed the final scene of the breaking of his engagement. The marquis waded farther in, and laid hold of his excellent English vocabulary.

"Madame, I am safe. Have no fear for me."

"But, marquis, how in the world did you get here? I thought you had gone to Mrs. Carson's to make a call on Nora, and I find you—"

"*C'est vrai, madame.* I did go to make a visit with Mademoiselle Nora—*mais*—there were others there—far too many others—and I had also unpleasant thoughts—and so I descended to the water to make a small promenade. As I rested after the so steep path down the hill, here at this—what is it you call it?—this pier, I saw floating on the water what seemed to be a human head. There was nobody within call. I ran out on the pier, far out. I leaned over trying to reach it. It would not do. I could not compass it. I therefore sprang in. What would you? *Voilà!* It was not a human being—not at all! It was—I do not know what it was—but there was nothing else for me to do, madame."

Mrs. Morris clasped her hands with fervor.

"How noble of you, marquis! Oh, how noble! It is wonderful!"

The marquis stood oozing and dripping on the sand anything but noble in appearance, and fully conscious of it. Moreover, he had much thinking to do, for the arrangements and the calculations of a year had been overthrown in what might have been called the twinkling of an eye; and there were creditors who would clamor, and there were those who had financed his wooing of

Mademoiselle Jeffrey, who would make a nasty fuss when it was discovered that the marriage was interrupted—and for a so foolish reason! None but a spoiled American girl allowed to run loose with much money of her own could have thought of interrupting a betrothal for the reason that her engagement ring was not a real stone. The marquis spat more sea water from him, and turned to the lady at his side.

"Madame, do you conceive of any way, any way at all, by which I can return to your Belle Terre Club without being seen by those who so habitually rock on its piazza? It is not seemly that I render myself in this condition to your so observant friends."

Mrs. Morris considered the lank figure before her; then she gave an involuntary glance up at the Carson house, and devoutly hoped Nora Jeffrey was not where she could see the man who had come from France to marry her. Girls were so foolishly affected by such things. They could not be counted on to see the heroism of a man's throwing himself into the water all for nothing when it made him look as he did. The marquis followed Mrs. Morris' glance, and spoke again, more hurriedly.

"Madame, of your so great kindness, reveal to me how I am to effect a secluded entrance into your club that I may rehabilitate myself at once before I am seen."

"Let us go at once, marquis. I will show you the way by the path along the hillside to the back entrance of the clubhouse. The hill here is covered with bushes and trees, and this path is secluded. It is cut out of the hill through what might almost be called a wood."

"Let us hurry, then, madame."

Mrs. Morris had done all the hurrying for the day that she felt able to do, and she resented the speed into which she was urged. After they had climbed one of the many steep cross paths that led to the path halfway up the bluff, there was no reason for haste. She, therefore, entered into conversation again with the silent man she was conducting.

"You said you saw Nora this morning, marquis?"

"I did, madame."

"How is your fiancée?"

"Madame, she goes no longer by that title. The engagement is broken."

"What!"

Mrs. Morris stopped short in the path; and, as it was narrow and she was a little ahead of the marquis, he perforce stopped, too.

"I assure you, madame, the fault was in no way my own. It seemed rather the arrangement of those with whom the care of Mademoiselle Nora is so curiously intrusted."

Mrs. Morris surveyed the marquis with dismay. This alliance had been well advertised among her friends. It was entirely to her taste, and redounded to her own powers of arrangement as well as to those of Nora's mother; for Mrs. Morris had been the one who had insisted to Nora's angry father that the match was suitable in every way, and that he had no right to interfere between Nora and her entrance into a distinguished family. And she had helped to keep Delaney from seeing Nora and influencing her with his ordinary tastes and ideas. And after all this, the affair was broken off as carelessly as if it was a mere invitation to dinner.

"Why, what an outrage!" Mrs. Morris exclaimed. "An engagement cannot be broken off in this fashion, without the consent of the family, merely by a foolish girl who does not know her own mind. Surely you are mistaken, marquis."

"Mademoiselle Nora's uncle, Monsieur Percy Jeffrey, was there at the time. Also Madame Carson. She took an important part in the matter. I think I cannot be mistaken."

"Percy! Why, Percy would not cross a room to interfere with anybody or anything—unless—Nadine Carson always did have influence over Percy; but I thought with her own engagement, and to Wrexford Thorne, of all men in the world, she had given up that kind of thing. But you never can tell about such a woman. She is not to be trusted out of one's sight. The whole thing is

doubtless Nadine Carson's fault. She is a born interferer."

Uncomfortable as he was and anxious to hurry, the marquis' attention was immediately arrested. Mrs. Morris continued with that discursiveness of the woman to whom self-control has a meaning only when its lack in others becomes an interference.

"Nora was entirely content with the prospect of marriage to you, marquis, until her mother unfortunately permitted her to visit Mrs. Carson. And now see! I told her mother she took a great risk; but she thought Nora would enjoy the change after all the trousseau shopping and fitting; and Nora's father was ill. It is outrageous."

"It is of a misfortune, indeed," snapped the marquis, looking down at his ruined clothes, and recalling not only the loss of his hat and stick, but of all the other things he had that morning lost. "It is a pity such things can happen. I went to great expense to come here—and for nothing at all." The marquis' wrath kindled with its expression. "And this Madame Carson, of all women, to interfere between a man and his fiancée. It is not to be born. We know the name of Carson in Europe—yes, many of us—and it is not for its so great wealth alone that we know it—no, not at all. That a young girl of France should be permitted to stay, without her family, in the house of so famed a woman, it would be impossible. But you—you American mothers—you are a recklessness."

"I am not an American mother," said Mrs. Morris indignantly. Her mind flew back angrily to the day before, when Nadine Carson had said to her with that assurance no other woman could equal: "Are you as artificial and as blind as you seem to be, or is it because you have never loved anybody more than you have loved yourself; never wanted to be a mother?" Mrs. Morris had forgiven Nadine Carson much. She had been forced to, since the rest of her family, even to its broad and numerous ramifications, loved Nadine dearly; and whenever Mrs. Morris bade them choose between them calmly

left her out; but this question she would never forgive her. She came back angrily to what the marquis was saying.

"So you have rightly said. You are unfortunately not a mother. Yet you are Mademoiselle Nora's aunt, and you were here at the club, but a short walk from the house where your niece was staying. You should have protected her. In my country she would have been protected from a woman of whom we men could relate such stories—if we would."

Now, Mrs. Morris knew, though she could not, perhaps, have phrased it, that gossip is the price we have to pay for personality. She knew that the circumstances surrounding Nadine Carson, the unhusbanded wife of a paranoiac, with the hoarded wealth of a great family at her disposal, combined with her beauty and her wit to make either a tragedy or a scandal, according as one's mind interpreted such things. She knew how she interpreted them. She had said, even after Nadine was released from the burden she had borne with so little sign of its heaviness, even after she was free to live her own life and to marry and to love if she chose and could, that the leopard would not change its spots.

But Mrs. Morris knew that few of those to whom she said this believed her; nor had she, for all her own certainty, ever come on any verifiable story that would really have kept a young girl's mother from permitting her to visit Nadine. Mrs. Morris did not doubt that such stories existed; but one would have had to be more clever than Mrs. Carson herself to discover them; and Mrs. Morris took pride in her lack of that kind of cleverness. And now here at her hand was proof that she had been discerning; that she had been able to see through this woman, who blinded more foolish people with her soft speech and her pretty face. Mrs. Morris looked at the marquis with what to an experienced eye might almost seem avidity.

"Do you really *know* anything about Mrs. Carson, or are you just talking?"

To the Frenchman, the phrase "just

talking" was not entirely clear; but to his already exasperated mind her tone of doubt conveyed a meaning not to be endured.

"Yes, I really know," he said briefly.

Mrs. Morris softened her voice to persuasion.

"Do you know anything—anything really definite, not mere hearsay or guesswork, that would justify me in removing my niece from Mrs. Carson's house? Anything that I could definitely give as my reason for so doing?"

The marquis hesitated for the smallest of moments. Then he said:

"Yes, it is quite definite. And I think that it would be sufficient to cause the removal you suggest. At least, it would be so in my country. In this country who can tell? The liberty you allow your young girls is of so shocking a degree, it is no wonder they do and say things beyond belief. Shall we proceed?"

The marquis painfully dragged his water-soaked clothes up the hill; and with each effort that he made his anger at those who had thrust him into so humiliating a position increased. Should a Marquis of Chambault suffer such indignity in silence? Should a man guiltless of all offense be cast forth from the house of a Madame Carson and into the ocean at her doorstep, and no reprisal be made? Of a verity it was time these impertinent Americans were taught a lesson that, if need be, they could remember all their lives.

Mrs. Morris, who had now fallen behind the marquis for fear of having her laces ruined, toiled a trifle breathlessly after him.

"Will you not tell me?" she panted. "Nora is blinded by Mrs. Carson's wheedling ways. Nora calls it charm, but it is not; it is her strange way of saying things, and of doing them. Nora has never seen anything like it. She says Mrs. Carson thinks while the rest of us only talk. This is what has influenced her. But removed from it things will be different."

"*Mon Dieu*, madame, why, then, do you not remove her, and be done with it?"

"It is not so simple. Nora has a will of her own; and not only a will, but an income of her own, left her by her grandmother. It is enough——"

"I know," groaned the marquis. "*Ventre-saint-gris*, I know!"

"That is why I urge you if you have a tangible reason to give it to me. You will not only confer a favor on me personally, but on all my misguided family. They all approve of and like this woman save myself."

In spite of an appeal that, punctuated by the lady's sharp intakes of breath, seemed almost passionate, the marquis hesitated. It was as he had said, Nadine's name was known in more than one great house in other countries than his own or her own, and for other things than its great wealth. The marquis reflected on these other things, among which were brilliancy and an immense *savoir faire*. If by any chance he would be required to face the lady with any story he might tell, he could not be sure whether this brilliancy would not defeat him. It had done so before. He had come to grief more than once in other days. There was that time at Sarnoff's, in the presence of the grand duke himself.

Mrs. Morris broke in on these reflections.

"I can quite appreciate, marquis, your delicacy about such a matter, your manly reluctance to speak ill of a woman. Still, there is my innocent and inexperienced niece also to remember. I assure you I will be most discreet in the mention of my source of information. I beg you, therefore, to lay aside your very natural and honorable restraint, and intrust me with your reason for objection to Mrs. Carson."

But the marquis was not to be so easily moved. He required time in which to reflect on the best way of lending any story that he told that verisimilitude that even in France is known as "getting away with it." Such things, especially when opposed to a lady justly renowned for her cleverness, require to be well thought out. And how could a man think with a devil of a wind drying his clothes on him in bunches, and an

importunate and fat woman staring and panting in his face.

"Madame," he said, "if you will guide me, without ostentation, to a private entrance to the club that I see so nearly approaching, I will, as soon as I am dried and once more presentable, tell you all that I know on the subject that my honor will permit me to reveal. Your woman's wit, that already I observe rises to the occasion, must supply the rest. I will, therefore, join you on the piazza in a half hour's time, and confer with you on this painful subject."

But Mrs. Morris' woman's wit was already working.

"Marquis," she said pleasantly, "when you come out on the piazza there will be no less than a dozen women waiting to talk to you, that they may write home that they have met a real marquis. There will be absolutely no chance for me to talk to you alone."

The marquis considered this somewhat new phase of the American character. Then he looked at the lady at his side. It was possible—so many strange things were possible in this country of strange women—that she might assent to a rendezvous.

"Madame, when I am dressed, I should return to look for my hat and my stick, that must be somewhere about the pier or the path leading down to it from the house above. There is no need that I lose a perfectly acceptable hat, and the stick is a gift from one I esteem most greatly, and I can never replace it. Therefore, if you will return this way with me while I search, we shall, doubtless, have opportunity for private conference."

Mrs. Morris had walked up and down hill all she cared to that day, yet she saw no other way to manage.

"I will return to the bench at the top of the path after I have shown you the back entrance to the clubhouse and wait for you, marquis." Then to palliate the baldness of this arrangement, Mrs. Morris permitted a thoughtful earnestness to deepen her voice. "You know," she said, "when a woman interferes with a man's solemn betrothal, a be-

trothal ratified by both families, she should be pretty sure that her own house is not of glass. Mrs. Carson is herself engaged to be married. She probably would not care to have her own engagement interfered with."

Hurried as he was, the marquis paused and considered this news, even to the neglect of the little pools of water dripping on Mrs. Morris' lace flounces, brought so dangerously near him by her effort at confidence. The marquis had found that it was one thing to make disagreeable accusations against an American woman by herself, but quite another to make them against a woman with a so large American man at her elbow. His present disgusting condition bore witness to the difference.

Mrs. Morris, concluding that the marquis was waiting for facts, gave them.

"She is engaged to the Reverend Wrexford Thorne."

"Ah!" The marquis' face brightened. "A what you call—a rector?"

"A bishop."

The marquis took heart. A bishop would never be a fighter, nor could he afford a scandal. He was bound hand and foot. Mrs. Morris continued:

"A woman engaged to marry a bishop cannot hope to continue being engaged to him if stories of a scandalous nature are proven true about her. Only the most blameless woman can be a bishop's wife."

The marquis nodded thoughtfully. Mrs. Morris smiled in what she believed to be her most persuasive manner. Her voice took on dulcet notes.

"If Mrs. Carson's engagement were broken—by your influence, marquis—as yours has been broken by hers—well?"

The marquis stared at the eager, shrewd face before him. It would have to be a very good story; a most miraculously good story. He brought Nadine Carson before his eyes, not as he had seen her that morning replying to his accusation of Nora Jeffrey's honesty, but as he had first seen her in Paris among his own people, in a gown of blue and silver, with pearls in her hair and round her neck. The marquis again paused in the path.

"Ah!" he exclaimed. "She was wearing the Sarnoff pearls that night at the Duchesse De Nailles! Madame, does your Madame Carson still possess a string of wonderful pearls of silver-blue tints, clasped by a single sapphire, a long, narrow stone set in silver?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Morris doubtfully. "She has many jewels, but she does not wear them often. But there is a string of pearls that she wears even in the morning sometimes—Percy says she is superstitious about them."

"They are the ones. There is a story about them. Whoever wears them has great good fortune in love. They are the pearls. They were a grand duke's present to a lovely lady once, and they fell to the lady's son, who bore her name, not his father's. They were Sarnoff's. And they are now worn by Madame Carson."

"She has millions," Mrs. Morris answered concisely.

The marquis shrugged.

"You do not understand such nuances. These pearls carry with them a—what is it that you call it—a charm—they are an amulet, warding off misfortunes of the heart. There is a story about them; they are called *joie dans amour*. Not millions could buy these jewels of Sarnoff. It is the sentiment. *Voilà*, this is where your woman's wit must divine what I cannot bring myself to say, madame."

It was about this time that there came down the hallway of Nadine Carson's house on the bluff a very tall man, immaculate in white flannels, and moving, in spite of his very evident hurry, with an ease that, had it been less indicative of trained muscular strength, would have been called grace. There was about him a certain nameless distinction that lay neither in his quiet face nor yet in his powerful figure; but seemed rather to envelop him as an atmosphere and mark him as one whose life was spent in reaching out after the real meanings of the millions of commonplace things beyond which most of us do not trouble to see.

This manner was given various names

by those who observed it. Rawlins, the Carson butler—and nobody is more observant of such things than those who serve—said that the Reverend Wrexford Thorne stood up well on his hind legs. In the days when Thorne had been rector of her parish, and Percy Jeffrey had been one of his vestrymen, Mrs. Morris had frequently complained to Percy that the rector was far too haughty for a spiritual director; to which the rector's brother, Carleton, who was nearly as tall and built of much the same fiber, had answered that it was a mere trick of physiognomy.

As Thorne moved down the hall, the door of the living room was thrown open by Nora Jeffrey, a radiant and smiling Nora, who caused Thorne a moment's pause in spite of his hurry. Then he saw Delaney behind her in the living room, and he smiled down on her delightedly.

"I conclude, Miss Nora, that you have been on with the old love and off with the new—unless my eyes deceive me."

"It's one way of putting it, Mr. Thorne. Were you—are you—looking for Nadine?"

"You have remarkable penetration for one pretty well immersed in rather difficult matters. I am looking for Nadine. I asked her a little bit ago to go for a walk—principally, I think, that we might keep out of your way and Delaney's. And while I came in for a hat she has run away."

Nora laughed softly. "You were very rash to leave her for a hat. Shall I tell you which direction she took?"

"You have no idea how I shall appreciate it."

"Oh, yes, I have. All the more because of these difficult matters in which you say I am immersed. She took the little path by the arbor that goes down into the cliff path—you know the path that runs along the cliff halfway between the top and the bottom."

"I do. But nobody knows which way she will turn when she reaches the cliff path—toward the clubhouse or toward the Inlet. So you will not mind if I try to catch her at once?"

Thorne swung out of the front door

and around the terrace in an incredibly short space of time. Emerging in the little path by the arbor, he quickened his pace until a turn of the path gave him a glimpse of a slim figure in blue that stood poised on the brow of the hill, holding with one hand onto a slip of a birch tree and peering over the edge of the hill at the beach below.

It was a woman whom any man might well be excused for hurrying after. Thorne sent his quiet eyes from the cloud of bronze hair the wind was blowing into a halo to the flutter of blue draperies about the silken-shod feet, and the ghost of a smile softened his close-shut mouth. Then, as he came nearer, she turned around suddenly, and he had a distracting vision of white forehead, and scarlet lips, and dark-lashed blue eyes that dwelt on him laughingly a moment, and then grew cool, as if she looked on one she found interesting but did not know. Accustomed as the man was to the astounding variety of her expressiveness, this swift change stopped him where he stood. She regarded him with polite inquiry.

"Were you looking for anybody?" she said; and, for all her coolness, her voice had a wonderful softness. "I cannot recall your name just now. Mr.—ah—what is your name?"

Thorne thrust his hands into his coat pockets to keep them from seizing the provocative slender figure that swayed toward him as it denied him.

"You insolent young thing!" he said.

"Doubtless you will forgive my insolence because of my youth," she answered. "Perhaps you think I ought not to ask your name."

"I very certainly will not tell it to you. You are engaged to be married. Therefore, all strange men should be as nothing to you."

"Wear a veil, and hie thee to a harem," she mocked. "How can you believe that there will ever come a time when men, strange or otherwise, will be as nothing to me? And if it came, you, who know men, know also that were they as nothing to me it would but make them the more determined to thrust themselves on my attention."

"Indeed, you should be made to wear a veil and live behind a high stone wall."

"Be comforted. I am going to marry a bishop. What more can you ask?"

He let a little silence accent her question. Then he answered:

"Much more!"

The quick color began to rise in her face. He watched it with joy in his power to bring it there by a mere look at her. They were very perfectly mated, and he knew it better than she.

"Much more," she mused. "How can there be so much more than such a marriage?"

"This much more," he answered her gravely; "that it is a man you are going to marry, and not a bishop—a man who loves you, and whom you love."

She gave him a look startling in its sudden tenderness; then she turned her head away demurely.

"I am glad to be so reassured," she murmured. "For I could not really believe it was anything but a bishop whom I had promised to marry. He has been so reserved, this prelate, so careful, so conventional. I have never before observed a betrothed bishop. It may be they all act that way, but in this case it—"

Wrexford Thorne's hands suddenly shot out of his pockets, and fell on the provoking shoulders before him. He almost shook them.

"By the soul of truth," he exclaimed, "this is too much. I have spent a year, a whole, lonely year away from you because of some stupid thing called convention; a year in which there was scarcely an hour that did not have its thought of you; a year of rising in the morning with your name on my lips, and knowing the whole day must pass with no sight or sound of you; watching for a postman who might pass by bringing no word from you; going to sleep at night thirsty for you, and waking again in the morning hungry for you. Then, after weeks and months of this—finally—you—the glow and the grace of you, the wonder and the sweetness of you; your eyes, your lips, your hair, your laughter.

"And with it—what? On every hand

a dozen dear-friend guests; around every corner somebody else, who wants you if only for an hour; at every turn some lovelorn creature needing your help to be set straight. And for me just a tantalizing moment snatched from all these others now and then; a glimpse of you as you fly on your errands of succor. Nadine dispensing tea when I hope for a moment alone on the terrace; Nadine at the head of the table making witty speeches when I want to hear but three words; Nadine on a horse that I may ride beside, ahead, or behind a group of chaffing onlookers! If I linger at the foot of the stairway for good night, just a mocking lady halfway up the stair and a rush of feet in denial when I pursue. If I beg for a walk down to the beach in the moonlight, behold a hostess who invites a dozen others to join us! If I lie in wait in the house watching my chance and come on you alone in the hall, always the click of an opening door and your laughter. And then—then—to crown it all, you talk of reserve—of my reserve—of my carefulness! The end of my endurance is reached. This whole morning shall be mine. Yes, and every other morning, and afternoon, and evening."

She drew away suddenly from his hold on her shoulders, laughing with a note that quickened the man's blood.

"Oh, boaster! Do you know so little of these things as not to know that you would have died of surfeit but for all these obstacles? What kind of a lover is it who cannot make his own opportunities, who cannot snatch them in the very face of opposition?" She backed away from him. "Shall I be won by any but a man who can command circumstances?"

Still drawing back, she made a sudden movement of denial. The man's arm shot out like lightning, and caught her as she swayed on the edge of the bluff. His face whitened.

"Nadine," he said, breathless, as he sat her on safe ground, "if you ever do so dangerous a thing as that again—can you not see what you might have done? You might have killed yourself."

She gave a backward glance at the

sheer fall of the bluff to the path below, and then to the beach; then her eyes returned to the man, and they still held mockery.

"No," she said. "I should not have fallen over. I am too used to walking in difficult places." Then, at the white stress of his face, she softened and sweetened deliciously. "Oh, Rex, Rex," she murmured, deep eyes infolding him, "how have I deserved you? Through all the difficult places that you know I have had to walk you have lost no faith in me. Even in the years before I knew you, you believe, do you not, that I was coming toward you?"

"Yes." He spoke the one word quite simply, yet no woman could have doubted it.

She looked at him in silence for a moment. Then she said:

"How did you come to understand me so well, dear? For you never make a mistake; no, not even the smallest kind of man mistake."

He lifted his hands and framed her face.

"In the dawn dreams about you, love lady, I learned how to love you. And in the dusk dreams about you I learned how not to love you. For all your provocativeness, there are many things you are too proud to endure. For all your bright allure, the man who yielded to you could not hold you; no, not one little hour. See, Nadine, I have your face prisoned here between my hands. I could begin here where the hair touches your forehead in that first distracting wave to kiss you. I could come down to your closed eyes. Were there ever such blue eyes! And then your neck, here in this white curve under your chin, and then—then your mouth. But you see I do not. Not one single kiss."

For all the deep undertone of his voice—that note in the voice that rings with the inmost fiber of the heart—there lay in the gray eyes reading hers a hint of gay railery that at any moment might become outright laughter. For a moment Nadine stood quite still, and her face, framed by the man's detaining hands, added to its wistfulness a subtle touch of exasperation. Perhaps the man

had hoped for this. He seemed in no way disturbed by it. She suddenly wrenched herself away.

"Not one single kiss?" she queried. "Why, man thing, that is because you cannot, not because you will not. You cannot even catch me, let alone kiss me!"

There was a flash of flying blue drapery, a glimpse of silken ankle, a rush of swift, small feet; and away down the path and over the side of the hill Nadine flew.

Wrexford Thorne had seen her ride, with that skill that makes the rider one with the swaying horse; and he had seen her swim, cresting the waves with the ease of the naiads from whom she had her name; and he had seen her dance with that suave grace that is the warp and woof of all allure; but he had never seen her run; and at the sight all his gay railery fled, and much of his easy self-control, leaving the primitive man within him suddenly awakened to an overmastering zest of pursuit.

He overtook her long before she believed he could. He caught and held her for a blinding, breathless moment. Then he lifted her in his arms. She had a flash of vision that showed her a face as white as hers was flushed, and powerful in a way she had but dimly guessed at before, in its released inhibitions. Then her eyelids were crushed down, and her lips sealed. And in all the world there was no laughter, nor yet any gayety, for the great things of life are grave, and their sweetness clings close to the hand of pain.

Wrexford Thorne took the cliff path back to the house alone, musing on the altogether fascinating shyness with which Nadine had asked him to leave her behind, alone for a while. He had taken her down to the beach to a bench of birch boughs set against the bluff where a steep cross path climbed to the cliff path above.

"You see," she said gravely, "I need a little space of silence to frame a new picture of you."

She was no less charming to him for her reluctances. There was about her,

for all her social grace and her ability with people and situations, the elusiveness of all woodland creatures. You may tame them to come close to you for a moment or an hour; you may even so progress in your training that they will take joy in many hours with you; but they must always be able to slip away into their silences and their hiding places or their strength is sapped, and the vitality they bring from their free, untenanted spaces is dimmed.

It was a miracle that, through her crowded life, Nadine had preserved this strength of the open places. It whispered to her lover a hundred proofs that there had been none other to come really close to her; none but he, who understood all her loyalty and sweetness. And this in spite of the many men who had loved her, or the maniac who had once married her.

And as he mused, Thorne suddenly heard voices ahead of him, for the path wound along the side of the hill with no more than a little space visible at a time. It was impossible for him not to recognize Mrs. Morris' querulous tones. He had fled from them too often in the days when he had been rector of her parish.

"Marquis, it is impossible for me to go to and fro this way any longer. You hunt for your hat alone. I will go down to the beach, and you can join me when you are ready to go back."

Thorne drew back into the shelter of a jutting fragment of the cliff. A silence ensued, and in a moment he ventured to go forward to where the path turned. Arrived here, he halted again, for this was the place where, but a little while ago, he had interrupted Nadine's flight; and the memory was one well worth dwelling over.

And then, just around the curve of the path, Thorne saw the Marquis De Chambault suddenly stoop over something lying on the ground, and lift it with a little exclamation of excitement. It was plainly a necklace of some kind. From the distance he stood it looked to Thorne like a string of pearls; and so absorbed in it was the marquis that he did not see Thorne at all. Thorne drew back again, shielded by the shrubbery

that caused the path to turn at this point, and watched the Frenchman.

The marquis looked at the necklace closely, pearl by pearl, at its exquisite shading, at the perfect match the pearls were in their delicate silver-blue colors. Then he looked at the sapphire clasp at the back, turned it over, and found the name engraved on the gold setting.

"Sarnoff!" he said aloud.

He knew quite well that it did not require the engraved name for him to have recognized the pearls. There was not another such string in Europe. They were worth a small fortune. They could be divided and sold separately, if necessary; or, with the clasp removed, he knew where they could be disposed of with no great danger and at a greater price, considering how perfectly they were matched, than if they were separated.

The marquis stared down at the shimmering jewels in his hand that were nothing more to the woman to whom they belonged than an added touch to a morning toilet. They might be a competence to him. And this woman had just lost him a competence. He had seen her many times in evening dress with jewels that far outweighed in value and splendor this string of pearls. She probably would scarcely miss it; and, if she had lost it as carelessly as his finding of it in the path seemed to indicate, she could not possibly know whether or not it had been found. The marquis stared at the pearls a few minutes longer, and then he slipped them into the breast pocket of his coat.

With the act, and its significance, the marquis suddenly acquired both suspicion and fear. He turned about to see if Mrs. Morris had by any chance followed him. Wrexford Thorne took advantage of this moment to retrace his steps to the steep cross path at the bottom of which Nadine still sat.

In the meantime, Mrs. Morris had emerged on the beach, and caught sight of Nadine some distance from her, sitting quietly on the bench where Thorne had left her. Mrs. Morris had the feeling that at last fortune was with her. She had been wondering how she was

to interview Nadine without the necessity of presenting herself at Nadine's door, with the possibility of being refused entrance. Mrs. Morris believed that the sooner she did her duty in removing Nora Jeffrey from Mrs. Carson's influence, and in announcing to her family why she thought the removal necessary, the more likely she was to have the very acceptable support of the marquis in this undertaking.

Mrs. Morris feared that the marquis' acute sense of honor would prevent him from reinforcing, with direct testimony, the story she felt she ought not to keep to herself. Mrs. Morris waited for a few minutes to see if Nadine was only resting for the moment, and might rise and come toward her; but Nadine made no movement. She was perfectly and exquisitely happy. The soft glow of her face showed it; the restful pose of her figure betrayed it. Even as Mrs. Morris waited, Nadine put her hand over her heart in an old familiar gesture, and smiled at some perfect memory that seemed to lend the sea and the sky new glory.

The gesture brought Mrs. Morris to a rapid decision. She would carry her war into the enemy's camp. The marquis would probably follow her in a moment should she have need of him. She moved sedately toward the rustic bench; and, as she approached, she saw Wrexford Thorne's tall figure emerge from the path at the side of the bench. Mrs. Morris had a slight shock. She would have preferred Nadine alone. In the old days, when Wrexford Thorne had been her rector, she had had more than one contention with him, and she retained a wholesome memory of the result. Then she reconsidered what she had to say, and took heart. All the better if the bishop were there to hear her. It would save her the trouble of bringing home to him personally the kind of woman he had promised to marry.

Nadine did not rise at her approach. She gave a little, backward look at Thorne, and then let her eyes rest gravely on Mrs. Morris, who came to a pause before her. But the bright happiness of her face retreated.

Mrs. Morris closed her parasol and dug it into the sand. She gave Thorne a slight nod, and then she spoke.

"Mrs. Carson," she said firmly, "I regret to have to bring the matter I am about to speak of to your attention in the way I shall have to do it. But I feel that where youth and innocence are in jeopardy, there should be no delay, and one's own personal regret ought not to stand in the way. I was on my way to your house when I saw you here, where, on the whole, I would much prefer to speak to you."

Thorne, standing behind Nadine's bench, let his hand fall lightly on the rail against which she leaned.

"I am obliged to tell you, Mrs. Carson," Mrs. Morris continued, "that you must let Nora Jeffrey, who is now staying with you, go away at once. Her family cannot permit her to stay under your roof any longer."

"It is evidently Nora you wish to speak to, Mrs. Morris," said Nadine.

"Be sure I shall speak to Nora; but I cannot do so until I have spoken to you. I am well aware that it is you, and you alone, who are responsible for the breaking of Nora's engagement to a perfectly satisfactory young man of high rank and unassailable position. I am also aware that Nora is a young and inexperienced girl on whom a woman like you could impose with perfect success. Therefore I could not hope to influence Nora until I had definite proof of the kind of woman you are."

Mrs. Morris paused threateningly; but Nadine made no answer.

"Many of us have known for years," Mrs. Morris continued, with a glance at Wrexford Thorne, "of your loose and careless ways with men. But you are quite clever enough to cover your tracks, and, though we have been sure that men could not flock after you in the way they have if you were all that you should be, there was nothing definite that we could seize on. It seems, however, that you are only another proof that there is always flame where there is so much smoke. I have suspected you from the first. The first year you put your husband in a sanitarium and went abroad;

and, in spite of the shocking tragedy of that poor young man at home, were followed all over Europe by all kinds of men. I knew you were a woman to be shunned. I have always known it. I told Honora Jeffrey she had no business to let Nora visit you, but she would not believe me. She said my suspicions about you had no foundation in fact. Well, now I know they have, and I shall see that my family takes cognizance of these facts, and that no member of it is permitted to associate further with you."

Nadine rose. Her eyes left Mrs. Morris and dwelt a moment on Wrexford Thorne's angry face. She spoke to him gravely.

"There is no need of my answering this, Wrexford, is there? Shall we go on?"

"There is certainly no need, Nadine."

He moved to her side. But Mrs. Morris was not to be so easily evaded. She had considerable bulk, and she planted it firmly before them.

"Doubtless you think it is very easy to dispose of this matter this way, Mr. Thorne. But you are a bishop, and this kind of thing about the woman you are supposed to be going to marry will so greatly hurt your own reputation that it will not be long before careful mothers will not wish their sons and daughters to listen to you."

It was at this moment that the marquis, searching for a path that should take him back to the clubhouse without encountering Mrs. Morris, came down the little cross path with a swiftness that a steep way combined with flabby muscles necessitated; and to his own surprise emerged suddenly on the beach and almost in the midst of the group he most wished to avoid. Nadine, white with anger, scarcely saw him.

"What an outrage!" she said, her low voice vibrating with a poignancy that seemed to shake the very center of her being. "What an outrage, that because of a private enmity to me, you should attack, through me, a man so unassailable that even lying scandal cannot touch him."

"There is scandal," said Mrs. Morris;

"and no position is so high that scandal cannot reach it. It just happens, however, that this scandal is not a lie. The marquis can prove the truth of one portion of it that has long been known in his circle."

"Nadine," said Wrexford Thorne, "do not remain. Let me deal with this. You will only hurt yourself."

Nadine saw the marquis for the first time. A subtle change came into her face. She shook her head at Thorne. She could no more have been stopped now than can any primal force let suddenly loose.

"Ah!" she said. "The word of a confessed distorter of truth, of a black-mailer and a cad, is, indeed, proof you should be proud of, Mrs. Morris. But two hours ago this man accused your niece, Nora, of theft. He said she had stolen from a ring he gave her a sapphire of rare value and replaced it by a piece of glass. Since your confidence in him is so great, doubtless you will believe this also. I did not, and I had him put out of my house for so infamous an accusation."

For a moment Mrs. Morris was disconcerted; and in that moment the marquis spoke suavely.

"The accusation was made, madame, after I had been thrice insulted; after my heart had been torn to shreds by the absolutely unwarranted breaking of an engagement on which I had staked high hopes. I was for the moment quite mad; and I could not—indeed, I cannot yet—explain the misfortune of the imitation stone. Therefore, is it to be so greatly wondered at that I spoke rashly? When a man's life hope and happiness are wrecked all in a moment, he will say rash things. I am not to be blamed."

Wrexford Thorne spoke curtly.

"You appear to have learned very little from the severe lesson given you for your rash speaking. Fresh from it, you begin on new, rash speech about another woman."

Thorne came closer to him; and it would have been evident to any wise man that Thorne was keeping his self-control with great effort. But the mar-

quis was not wise, save in a few things of no use to him in his present company. He recalled with relief that this man was a bishop, though he looked less like it than any man he had ever seen. The marquis made the kind of answer a man makes to one he does not fear.

"There was," he said, "nothing rash in my saying to Mrs. Morris that all Europe knew that the Sarnoff pearls had been given to Sarnoff's mother by a grand duke of Russia, reputed to be Sarnoff's father. And that all Europe knew such pearls were not for sale. If only for the story that goes with them—the charm they are supposed to bear. Therefore, when, after a much remarked and ardent friendship between Sarnoff and madame, your fiancée, these pearls, the wonder of several countries, appeared around madame's so lovely throat—yes, and stayed there, and were borne away to her own country—*voilà!* These things need no comment. Men give such things, not for a smile, not even for great wealth, not for— Ah, *mon Dieu!*" for Wrexford Thorne had gripped him in a crushing clasp.

At the marquis' first words, Nadine's hands had almost unconsciously sprung to her throat. No pearls were there. For a moment this registered itself on her brain, and then was driven out by Thorne's threatening movement.

"Wait!" she said, turning to Thorne a face that stilled even his hot anger. "Wait! I will do Monsieur De Chambault the honor to answer this. Not because of myself, but because of Sergius Sarnoff, and of his wife, Natalie, who is my friend; and because he has told the story before a woman who would prefer to believe it instead of recognizing how impossible it is for it to be true.

"I think all of you know of Natalie Sarnoff, of her beauty and her wonderful voice. Perhaps you do not know that at the time she met Sarnoff, when she was studying in Paris, she had barely enough money to complete her preparation for grand opera, where she must have succeeded had she continued. Able as I was to help her, she would accept nothing from me, and the Sarnoff family violently opposed his marriage to her

because of her poverty. This opposition meant the withdrawal of such income as Sarnoff had. It left him, as they hoped it would, absolutely too poor to marry. I discovered that his pride was as great as Natalie's.

"It was here that the pearls came in. They had been his mother's, as the marquis has said. His mother has been long dead, and connected with the pearls was this story that kept him from using them as a means of solving his money difficulties. They must be parted with only for the sake of love. They had been a love gift, and whoever obtained them, because of love, was supposed to obtain with them love joy. That is why they are called—*joie dans amour*.

"Sarnoff was willing to give the jewels to me for the sake of love, but not for love of me—for love of Natalie. And for the pearls I gave him one hundred thousand dollars. It has been the nest egg from which he has won a fortune. I think it has made him happy in his marriage. I think it has brought him joy in love. And I keep the pearls because I think, when Sarnoff has made a fortune large enough, he will wish to buy them back from me for Natalie to wear."

Nadine turned to Mrs. Morris.

"Are these the definite facts on which you base your attack on me? Is this the story that will cause the mothers of young girls and young boys to resent Wrexford Thorne's influence in their lives?"

"Why should I take your story of this matter instead of the marquis'?" said Mrs. Morris sullenly.

Wrexford Thorne's eyes had not left the marquis' face, nor had his hand left the Frenchman's shoulder. When, therefore, as Nadine had spoken of the price she had paid for the pearls, Thorne felt under his hand the faintest of tremors, and with it an oddly shrewd look in the marquis' face, Thorne was suddenly reminded of what he had turned back, on his way to the house, to tell Nadine. Still holding the marquis, he turned to Nadine.

"Nadine, did you wear these pearls this morning?"

"Yes," said Nadine, her hands going again to her throat. "Yes. But they are——" She searched within her collarless gown. "They are not here."

"I thought not," said Wrexford Thorne. "Do you recall that we stopped in the path on the side of the hill, a little to the right of where this cross path joins it?"

"Yes," she breathed, the color deepening in her face at the memory he evoked.

"It was here," Thorne continued, "that your pearls must have slipped off. At any rate, it was here that the marquis picked them up."

Thorne's hold tightened on the marquis' shoulder like a wrench of pain. The marquis gave a swift glance at the face so little like a bishop's, and utterly lost his head.

"It is a lie!" he said excitedly. "It is a lie!"

Thorne eyed him gravely.

"You deny it? You have not seen pearls of any kind this morning? You have not found a necklace on the path above?"

"Absolutely not! Let go my shoulder!"

"I could have understood," said Thorne quietly, "your having found a necklace and not returning it until you were sure of its owner; but in this case there was no need of your waiting. It seems you know these pearls quite well. Mrs. Carson has lost her pearls—the Sarnoff pearls, whose value is one hundred thousand dollars. Will you return them to her?"

"I tell you," said the marquis, "this is an impertinence that I will not endure. It is a shameless persecution. Let go of my shoulder. I do not wish to stay here any longer."

"I shall let you go in a moment. But unfortunately, since you will not return the pearls, I shall have to take them from you."

Thorne had been watching while he talked. One might almost have said that he talked for the purpose of watching; and, when the marquis' hand fell affrightedly across his breast in an unconscious gesture of protection,

Thorne's hand was there with it, wrenching it aside. His fingers, deft and strong, disappeared in the breast pocket of the marquis' coat, and drew from it a strand of perfectly matched pearls that shimmered and gleamed with a hundred shades of blue and silver as he held them up.

"You infamous scoundrel!" shrieked the marquis furiously. "These pearls are my own. I brought them from France for a wedding present."

Thorne let the pearls slip down into his palm until he held between his thumb and finger the sapphire clasp.

"Mrs. Morris," said Nadine suddenly, "will you witness that on the silver of this clasp the word Sarnoff is engraved?"

Mrs. Morris bent over the clasp. Its silver setting was a narrow one, and the engraving was fine, yet the name could be read. She gave the marquis a curious look. Thorne, still holding him, spoke to her.

"And now, Mrs. Morris, I think the only thing you can do is to go. Not even an apology would help. You have not only been despicably suspicious and incredibly evil-minded, but you have been utterly foolish and silly. A little thief of a man, whom anybody of even ordinary discernment would find it hard to believe in, has imposed first on your family, and then on you. He came over here, financed by his creditors, to acquire Miss Nora's fortune. You can guess what he had to offer in exchange. It was not because of your wisdom, or your decency, that Miss Nora was saved from the gravest of misfortunes. You have championed this man. You have upheld him. You have classed yourself with him. I think you cannot expect us to condone this. As for him, I would give him the thrashing he deserves were he only more of a man. Yet there are some things I shall insist on. He must get out of America to-day. Any steamer sailing any place will do. If he does not, I shall make him. Meantime, as I am not quite through with him, I shall ask you to leave us alone immediately." He turned to Nadine. "Nadine, I will join you at the house."

Mrs. Morris gave no sign of having heard. But she took her parasol from the sand where it had fallen, and moved with what dignity she could command down the beach.

Nadine waited at the top of the hill. It was not long until she saw the tall figure in white coming up. He paused before her in silence.

"What did you do with him, Wrex-ford?"

He shook his head.

"Here are your pearls, Nadine. I wonder if you would mind putting them

away until such time as they can be repurchased from you. Somehow I think I should like you to wear my pearls. Will you?"

She met his eyes deeply.

"I have meant to send these pearls back for a long time, hoping Sarnoff was ready for them. I was superstitious, or I would have done so before. I so greatly wanted *joy in love*."

He put his hands about her face in the gesture he had used an hour ago.

"Have you found it, Nadine?"

"I have found it, dear."



AGE

I'VE known the glaze and glamour,
The glory and the fret,
The quiet and the clamor,
The languor and the sweat;
The roaming winds have thrilled me
With longing and desire,
The wanderlust has filled me
With fervor and with fire.

I've seen the deeds and dreaming,
I've known the truth and lies,
And I have seen love gleaming
In my beloved's eyes.
Life's savor, sweet or bitter,
I've tasted in my time,
I've known the glow and glitter
The prose and laughing rhyme.

Yet now the game is over,
And I am gray and bent,
Still, still you see a rover
Who cannot be content;
For somewhere "over yonder"
Beyond the starry pale
There still are roads to wander,
And I must hit the trail!

BERTON BRALEY.



The Society Reminiscences of FREDERICK TOWNSEND MARTIN

CHAPTER IV.

ALBANY AND SOCIAL ORGANIZATION.

TO understand the society of Albany in the latter part of the nineteenth century, one must realize that the old traditions of family have stood for more there than they did even in New York, where standards more quickly changed with the industrial progress of the nation. Money meant less to society in Albany than it did in New York, even in the days of my youth, and, if I may use the word, people of fashion were more exclusive. Most of the families had descended directly from the original Dutch Patroons, and had lived on their estates from generation to generation, satisfied with their own little world. Importance was added to this tradition-nurtured organization by reason of the city's being the capital of the Empire State, and a great many affairs had the official tone, through the attendance of influential statesmen, that gives to European society its significance in history.

I have always been glad that as a young man I had some part in this interesting phase of the social development of Albany, though as a boy my mind and heart ever turned toward the greater and more brilliant metropolis.

As I have said before, my father, Henry Hull Martin, was born in the village of Avon, New York, in 1809. After being graduated from Union College, his first position was that of pri-

vate secretary to Governor Troup. He met my mother, Anne Townsend, while filling this position, and in due course won her hand and the consent of her father to the marriage. Many and many a time I remember hearing my father laugh over the consternation of Isaiah Townsend, her father, when he formally asked for her hand.

"Young man, what have you got to support my daughter with?" asked Isaiah Townsend. And my father replied: "Nothing but the brains that God has given me, and with these I hope to be able to take care of your daughter, and make her happy in life!"

My father used to tell this story with considerable pride, and it was always a source of happiness to him that he proved his word, and was able, not only to support his wife and bring up his children, but to look after his widowed mother and two sisters, and to do for them what he was doing for his own children in the way of helping them.

At the same time that he acted as secretary to Governor Troup, my father studied law, and was admitted to the bar. He started to practice in Albany, and continued practicing law until 1854, when he went into the banking world.

I was the seventh and youngest child.

I was born in the quaint, old-fashioned Dutch city of Albany, situated on the banks of the beautiful Hudson River. I came into the world on a cold, windy night on the sixth of December.

I have often heard my elderly rela-

tions marvel that I arrived in the world alive, for my mother's only illness, with the exception of the one she died of, came to her a few weeks before my birth. She was taken with inflammatory rheumatism, and was desperately ill, so ill that they feared for her life. I have heard that while those who were dearest to her watched in her room, others, old friends and relations, were gathered round the log fire below stairs in the sitting room. They shook their heads despondently, for they could only surmise a fatal termination to the night's watching. Those to whom the weight of many years had brought wide experience prophesied gloomily. Even the elements seemed to indicate an unhappy ending to this crisis. The loud blast of the storm rumbled and wailed in the roomy chimney, while the rain lashed at the windowpane. To the accompaniment of the wind on that cold winter's night, and, in spite of my mother's terrible sufferings and illness, I entered the world—a strong, healthy child.

My mother named me Frederick Townsend, after her brother, who, at that period, had left for California to seek his fortune in the gold mines. He had been lured away by the wonderful tales of the Argonauts—as the Californian miners were called in those days. Since his departure he had not been heard of, and my mother had been afraid he was lost. He came back safely afterward, and when I was a small boy I remember sitting by him, as he, my uncle, told me the story of his adventures with the Indians, their fierce encounters, and how he had escaped, and come round by the horn. I gasped with excitement as my uncle related all this to me years later.

My mother and father took a prominent part in the society of Albany, and as a little boy I remember being taken to the house of many of the influential people of the city. One visit in particular impressed itself on my young mind, and fired me with an ambition to go West and fight Indians—just the same as most young boys. We went to visit Mrs. Schuyler. She was my aunt's grandmother, and lived in the old

Schuyler mansion. Her mother, Mrs. Howard Townsend, was a Schuyler, and a direct descendant of General Schuyler, of Revolutionary War fame. In the upper part of the great oak dining-room door was imbedded an Indian tomahawk, which had been there ever since a warrior many years before had hurled it through the window, while the whole family were sitting at dinner. According to the story told, none was hurt, but the family religiously preserved the tomahawk, and there it remained where it had struck as a memento of those grim days.

But the tenderest memories are of my beloved mother, to whose unflagging care and attention I owe so much. I can see again my little bedroom at home, and hear my mother coming rustling down the hall. Often she would be in evening dress, either going out, or entertaining guests at home. She would kneel and hear my prayers, and then, in her sweet voice, sing me one of the hymns she loved best.

One day, at the primary school I attended, a table, that I was trying to help the teacher move, fell on me, and injured my back. I lay for six months, unable to move, but never a day of the time was my mother away from me. It was during those long weeks of illness, when she read to me constantly, that she instilled into me the love of books, and in particular historical works, the memory of which I retain to this day. It was her care that restored me to perfect health, and I never felt any ill effects from what might have been a very serious accident.

On my recovery I was sent to the Albany Academy, which I attended until I was fourteen, when I entered Union College. From there I was allowed to come home every week for Saturday and Sunday. Those were joyful reunions, and ones that I looked forward to from one week to the next, until the death of my dear mother removed that sweet and ennobling influence that a man or woman can have but from one person on earth—his or her mother.

Then there was the dancing school.

In those days dancing was a source of

great pleasure to me. I can see the dreary old town hall where we met, with its bare walls, and the old-fashioned fiddler. He was constantly on the move, for at the same time that he played his violin, he taught us the steps as well; and I so well remember the blows of that bow! He would strike me with it, saying:

"Frederick, out with that foot!" And the mortification was so great that I remembered it, and became a good dancer.

No monarch could ever have had more control over that little class than did this old fiddler; and the strength of that bow must have been something wonderful, because not only did it produce music, but it also produced the blows which disciplined those children.

I remember especially how, when waltzing round one day with a charming little girl with golden hair, we whirled so fast to the time of the old fiddle that I got dizzy at the end of the hall, and, passing a wooden box with logs in it, my dear partner dropped from my arms into this box as we passed. My reputation for mischief was such that they concluded at once that it was done on purpose; in fact, to this day the family will have it so. But it was merely the dizziness. I can still hear the shriek of the mother as she saw her darling child deposited in the wood box.

Perhaps these very personal recollections will be pardoned when it is remembered that the society of New York and Albany was founded on family traditions, and in my young days these traditions were much more closely associated with the personal lives of the people than they are now.

My father had been a lawyer, and he desired that I should be one, so, after my mother's death, I left Union College, and began a course at the Albany Law School. Subsequently, I was taken in the office of the late Judge Hand, of the Court of Appeals, and in due course was admitted to practice at the bar. I lived at home with my father, of course, as my brother, Bradley Martin, and my sister had both married while I was a young man. My sister

had married Julian Tappin Davies, a young and successful attorney at law of New York City, while my brother had married a Miss Sherman, and also had taken up his home in New York. Our lives together led to an understanding between my father and myself more like brothers than father and son.

In those days I was greatly interested in the social organizations of Albany, and was elected president of the Young Men's Association at so early an age that I was one of the youngest presidents the club ever had had. The organization was the oldest of its kind in the State—indeed, one of my uncles had been one of its presidents before I was born. Not only did the club support a large circulating library, but during the social season it held concerts, lectures, and amateur dramatic entertainments. The public meetings of the association often had before them some of the most eminent men and women of the day in all the activities of life. Indeed, my first experience in public speaking was gained when I was called upon to introduce the Honorable Carl Schurz, the eminent writer, philosopher, and reformer, who lectured before the association one night. Ah, how I labored over those few remarks that were but the introduction of the speech of a great man!

In connection with this incident, I recall an interesting fact. While I was yet a newly elected president, a Mrs. Moulton came to Albany to give a concert for our association. She was an American lady—the possessor of a marvelous voice. Formerly endowed with ample means, she had lived delightfully, and had been a power in the American colony in Paris and a friend of the Empress Eugénie and Napoleon III.

In that era of fortune and fashionable luxury she had been accustomed to delight the guests at the Tuileries with her wonderful voice; but when her husband died she found that she was no longer rich, and her friends persuaded her to make a tour in her native land in order to increase her means. One of her first appearances was at the concert in Albany, for which I, as president of the association, had eagerly engaged her.

The house was packed, people coming from all sides of the country surrounding Albany to hear this great lady, who had been one of the leaders of American society in Paris.

I remember she was wearing on her arm that night a most beautiful bracelet, with a brilliant emerald in the head; and as I led her to the stage I spoke in admiration of it, and she told me how the Emperor Napoleon had given it to her at the last concert at which she sang in the Tuileries.

When I was introduced to her, my vanity had suffered a severe shock, for on seeing me she exclaimed, forgetting herself for a moment:

"What! Not this young man as president of this great association?"

"Then, madam," I replied, without hesitation, "I rely upon you to help me forget my youth in making this entertainment a great and splendid success."

As a matter of fact, the first appearance of this talented lady at Albany was the forerunner of a most successful tour through the country, by which she raised what was in those days considered a large sum of money.

Charlotte Cushman, the actress, was another of the well-known people of the day who appeared before our association. I had no idea that it was necessary to make a speech. I had intended to merely say that the great Charlotte Cushman, whose name was a household word to all those who admired the histrionic art, was about to give a reading of one of Shakespeare's plays; but while I was sitting next to her she leaned over, and suddenly said, in a loud whisper, which was probably heard by the audience:

"Be sure and make a little speech to introduce me."

At first I was paralyzed. I could not think of anything to say. I was then a mere youth, and my presence of mind was severely tested. It was a critical moment, and I stepped forward, shaking and trembling, without seeing anybody in the audience. Suddenly, as I stood there, a happy inspiration brought to my mind the story that my father had told me about Charlotte Cushman—

how, as a young man, he had gone one night to the theater to see Walter Scott's "Guy Mannering," when the actress who was to take the part of *Meg Merrilies* was taken ill. They substituted Miss Cushman, an unknown actress. Suddenly called upon to take the part, she made the hit of her life. Her magnetism and enthusiasm roused the audience to such a pitch of excitement that she became convinced of her own power. Inspired with the courage which the people had given her that night, she entered upon that wonderful career of success. "And," said I, in concluding my impromptu speech, "she will appear before you to-night—the greatest actress of her day!"

From that little speech dated my friendship with Charlotte Cushman, for she became my devoted friend until the day of her death; and many times in her life she told this story of the young president who had introduced her to an Albany audience.

Just as unconsciously as I have allowed these very personal recollections to run on did those short years of my boyhood and young manhood pass. All during this time—as a little boy at school during the Civil War, and as a young man working in the Young Men's Association, I was making frequent trips to New York, and gaining a larger and larger acquaintance and a broader comprehension of the great social world centering in the metropolis.

Fired by the stories of heroism on the battlefields, it was, of course, my ambition to go to war. Failing in this, I joined the Zouave Cadets of the Tenth Regiment Militia of the State of New York as soon as I was old enough. The company was one that was well known then, and in later years, as being made up of fine young fellows, and it really was more like a social club than a military organization.

My first parade was on the occasion of General Sheridan's visit to Albany after the war, and I stepped out proudly, I can tell you. But my disappointment can be imagined afterward when my father asked me what company I was in, as he could not recognize me

from the others. However, there was compensation in the fact that while wearing my uniform I was introduced to General Sheridan by my father. I remained in the militia a number of years, and finally finished off my military career as colonel on Major General Carr's staff.

My brother Bradley joined this company earlier than I did, and his first parade was even more memorable than mine, as he was ordered out to participate in the parade that escorted the body of the martyred President Abraham Lincoln from the railroad station to the capitol at Albany, where it lay in state during the night. Bradley was one of the sentinels that stood guard over the bier throughout the night. Shortly after this, my brother left the Zouave Cadets, and was appointed first lieutenant of the Ninety-Third Regiment of New York Volunteers, with which he served his country until the formal close of the war. His marriage, mentioned earlier in this chapter, came a short time after his return home.

CHAPTER V.

MY FIRST TRIP TO NEWPORT.

Though I was happy in my busy life at Albany, I ever looked toward that greater social center, New York, and the surrounding places where the fashionable New Yorkers spent much of their time. Consequently, I found it necessary very frequently to visit my sister, Mrs. Julian Davies, and my brother, Bradley, both of whom were living in the metropolis. And I was very happy when the opportunity came to spend a few weeks with my brother and his wife at their villa in Newport, which at that time was a beautiful, quiet country town, where a good many of the smart people had built simple, comfortable little summer homes. Newport in those days was nothing like it is now, with "villas" that cost up into the millions to build, and require an army of servants to keep in trim for the guests entertained there.

Shortly before that time there had

been a very important series of entertainments of which people still were talking; and my imagination was so fired by the accounts of these balls that I was impatient, indeed, for the time to come when I should take my place among the guests at such notable affairs. One, in particular, I remember as having been talked of for years. This was the brilliant fancy-dress ball given by Mrs. Peter Lorillard Ronalds, in New York, at *Mi-carême*, just before the close of the Civil War. It was one of the largest entertainments ever given at the grand old mansion where the Ronaldses made their home. The house stood, I remember, at Twenty-fifth Street and Madison Avenue, but long ago retreated before the northward march of the city.

Mrs. Ronalds, a very beautiful woman, was a recognized leader of society, and was then at the zenith of her social fame. She purposely sent out invitations three months in advance of the ball, so that her guests might get their costumes from abroad—an opportunity of which many availed themselves.

The hostess impersonated "Music." She wore a wonderful robe of heavy white satin and gold, embroidered with music from Verdi's opera, "*Ballo in Maschera*." In her hair she wore a crown that had been made in Paris especially for her. It was formed of notes, quavers, et cetera; and on the middle note was a harp which was pierced and illuminated with tiny gas jets. The little reservoir which contained the gas supply was concealed in her hair. This illuminated headdress glowed all the while she was receiving her guests, and was not removed until she began to dance. To add to this, she wore a necklace of music in jewels.

Mrs. Ritchie, the present Mrs. Adair, was dressed as a rainbow, and Mrs. August Belmont represented a game of dominoes in a very original and unique costume. The husband of the hostess was dressed as a Spanish toreador; and Miss Josephine Carter, sister of the hostess, was dressed as Diana.

Only a few years ago Mrs. Ronalds again impersonated "Music" at a ball

given by her grace the Duchess of Devonshire, at Devonshire House, in London. She wore a dress similar to the one already described; but the harp was this time illuminated with little electric lamps, each bulb being no larger than a dime.

At the time of the Civil War, Mrs. Ronalds, who was the possessor of an excellent soprano voice, sang at Leonard Jerome's private theater in several benefits for wounded soldiers. She took the prima-donna part in no less than four operas, "Rigoletto," "La Sonnambula," "Ernani," and "Linda di Chamouni." Robert Cutting and many others well known in society sang with her.

So, with the pictures conjured up by the accounts of such affairs, it is small wonder that I seized with eagerness the invitation of my brother, the first summer after his marriage, to visit him in Newport, and meet his host of fashionable friends.

It was during this summer that I first met Ward McAllister, the cotillion leader whose activities always attracted so much attention. He was a Southern gentleman in every sense of the word, and in appearance a handsome likeness of Napoleon III. The expression of his eyes, however, was far more genial and charming than the emperor's, and in his great kindness to me as a young man he fully lived up to the promise of his expression. He introduced me to everybody, and did what he could to make my life at Newport a happy one.

Even at that early age, I was impressed by the man's genius for organizing parties. His picnics were social events. He had the faculty of bringing together the very people who wanted to know each other, and at the same time brought with him all the courtly manners of the early South.

He was criticized by many, but never by those who knew what a good and noble heart he had. He was always kind to those about him, and always was trying to say something good, instead of something evil, about others.

He was never idle, for he was constantly reading, trying to improve himself, and to do what he could to main-

tain the high ideals of social life. His one desire was to bring cultivated, congenial people together, to give delightful dinners where wit and merriment prevailed, and where one found the time and repose necessary for the enjoyment of conversation.

I witnessed a part of a determined social struggle that summer which resulted in victory for the brilliant Mrs. Paran Stevens. I had been told, before meeting her, that she had appeared in the social world just before the Civil War. Immediately she entered a room, one could not help but be impressed by the force of her character. She was a brunette, tall and dignified. She held her head in a proud and lovely pose, her hair all combed back smoothly; and in those days she generally wore simple but striking dresses. She had that magnetism of the born hostess of always drawing the best out of one.

When Mrs. Stevens arrived in New York she knew nobody. In a city with such an exclusive set as they had in those days, it was a herculean task for a stranger to succeed in placing herself in the position she made for herself.

But a large share of the credit for this success must go to her talented sister, Miss Fanny Reed, whom I also met for the first time during this summer visit to Newport, through the introduction of Mr. McAllister. Miss Reed's beautiful voice charmed all who visited Mrs. Stevens' home, and soon she had the reputation of having at her receptions the best music to be found in the country. It was currently reported that Mrs. Stevens had the worst cook in town. Her housekeeping was very careless. But her marvelous personality, coupled with her sister's music, was such as to counteract all this; and, though she had a battle to do it, she finally drew all the smartest people to her city home and her magnificent Newport villa.

Mrs. Stevens accidentally had hit upon Sunday evenings for her weekly receptions and musicales; and her social career, which was then at an important stage, was endangered by the opposition of the old Knickerbocker families who still considered any kind of pleas-

ure on Sunday very sinful. However, Miss Reed once told me that as soon as her sister encountered opposition, the whole force of her character was roused to overcome all obstacles. For a time it looked as though Puritanism would win the day; but that summer saw people give in to Mrs. Stevens, and from then on her career was assured.

One day while things were looking the worst for her, I said to her: "But, Mrs. Stevens, you don't know what they are saying about you in regard to your Sunday-night entertainments. They call it Sabbath breaking—they say——"

And well I remember her answer as, drawing herself up, she put the whole force of her independent character in three indignant phrases:

"They say! *What* do they say? *Let* them say!"

When out walking one day with Miss Reed, I was congratulating her on her tremendous success of the concert she had given the previous evening at her sister's home.

"These are not my supreme triumphs," she replied. "I wish you could have been present at the concert of my life. It was here in Newport, at the time of the Civil War, and the entertainment was given to raise funds to provide comforts for the poor, wounded soldiers. Mrs. Charles Coon was one of the great ladies who helped me to organize this concert.

"Mrs. Julia Ward Howe, the authoress, and Mr. August Belmont were on the stage with me.

"What will you sing?" they asked me. I immediately offered to sing the tremendous 'Battle Hymn of the Republic' with which Mrs. Howe had aroused the nation; and, as the notes rang out over the great audience, the author stood beside me and wept. The applause had a quality that I never before or since have found—a depth of sincerity that only comes from great moments."

When later on Miss Fanny Reed took up her home in the American colony at Paris, it was remarked that there was a great and decided falling off in the standard of the music at Mrs. Paron Stevens' concerts on Sunday nights.

Hence, the amusing passage of arms between Mrs. Stevens and the well-known wag, Mr. Travers, who, presenting himself at one of her Sunday evenings, after a prolonged absence, was gently chided by her with the words:

"Well, Mr. Travers, I was afraid you had forsaken me entirely."

"Madam," he replied, "I was unable to resist the magnetism of your charming society, so here I've come back to get your cold tea, hot Apollinaris, and hear bad music."

"And I know," gayly replied the hostess, "that you find ample compensations for these trifling drawbacks in a house where I leave no stone unturned to bring together all the charming people of the day."

This remark taught him, as many others had been taught, that Mrs. Stevens was ever ready to defend her prestige with a quick answer.

Then, too, I met George Griswold Gray and his wife, who was Miss Susan Irvin, of whose belleship I spoke in a previous chapter. They lived in a little, old, rambling, one-story house, covered with creeping vines and flowers of all sorts. The walls of the large drawing-room were entirely hung with pink cretonne or chintz, on which were painted quaint, little, old-fashioned Dutch houses. Everything throughout the house was cheerful and bright, and a glad sunshine seemed to permeate all the rooms, so that it was a joy to enter them. I often think now of the hostess, Mrs. Griswold Gray, who had a smile of welcome for every one who crossed her threshold, and forgot herself in the joy and pleasure of receiving her guests. Mr. Gray also was one of the leaders at Newport. He was a famous whip, driving occasionally a coach with six horses, and giving delightful coaching parties, to which every one was anxious to be invited.

Before his marriage he became celebrated for two successive dinners. He announced beforehand that one would be called "The Beauty Dinner," while the other, which would take place the following night, was to be called "The Intellectual Dinner." This announce-

ment created no end of a flutter in the social world, as all the ladies were wondering to which of the two they would be invited.

The centerpiece of the dinner table was on this occasion a real fountain, the table being constructed around this original decoration. At times the fountain played so high that it reached the costly ceiling, which collapsed the next day.

CHAPTER VI.

A SNUB, A SNOB, AND A LESSON.

At Newport that summer I met so many of New York's social set that when the season came around I had ample opportunity for seeing a great deal more of the fashionable life in the metropolis than I had time for. My days were practically all taken up at Albany with my law studies, my work as president of the Young Men's Association, and in the Zouave Cadets; but, nevertheless, I managed to take a few days now and then to attend affairs that particularly appealed to my youthful tastes. During this season I had my first experience with the genus snob which we find in every walk of life, but of which we hear most in society.

I have seen a good many snobs in my life, and, since having attained a riper experience in many countries with many different kinds of people, it has been a matter of considerable interest to me to study the make-up of snobs. With many snobbery becomes a disease. It is the essence of selfishness and the antithesis of generosity. It drinks up the last drop of the milk of human kindness; it puts out the last sparks of pity and sympathy. The snob is a most unhappy person himself; but, what is worse, he reduces every one else with whom he comes in contact to a like state.

There are but few youngsters in society who have not felt the cruel sting inflicted by some brainless snob fearful of his or her position. Naturally, I was sure to have some such experience sooner or later; but I did not realize that in those days, and the heartache was as real as if the wound had been from a

worthy person—and it is not the fault of the snob that bitterness did not take the place in my heart that should have held only pity for her.

The summer before, at Newport, I had met a young girl who was to come out the following winter, and this ball was to be her first, as well as mine. I had had many a charming talk with this fair girl. She had so much feeling, so much sentiment, so little worldliness in her nature, that she formed a wonderful contrast to her mother, who was a lady of fashion, so that one always said: "What a beautiful creature Madam L. is. Such fine eyes, such wonderful, glossy-black hair, such marvelous skin! If she could only have the heart that her daughter has what a perfection of a nature that would be."

The world said that where the heart should be, there was only a bit of ice. I doubted this until my experience at this ball.

When I had secured my invitation, I wrote from Albany, and asked this young girl if she would dance the cotillion with me. I well remember the charming note she wrote in return, saying that nothing would delight her more, and that she would look forward to our meeting at this ball with the greatest pleasure. It seems that she never told her mother of this, for she later told me that the day before the ball her mother said to her: "I am quite worried that you haven't told me that any of the young men who come to see you have asked you to dance at your first ball." "Oh," replied the young girl, "I forgot to tell you, I am going to dance it with Fred Martin, of Albany."

"What!" replied her mother. "Dance with Fred Martin, coming from a provincial town—from out in the country? Why, I never heard of such a thing! I won't permit it."

I arrived in New York in the afternoon all enthusiasm and anticipation, only to find a note from the girl's mother saying that her daughter was not very well, and that she would not be at the ball, so that the engagement to dance the cotillion with me was off. This was, naturally, a great disappointment to me,

as I knew so few people. I was only in my teens; and never shall I forget the shock when, coming out of the cloak room and just about to enter the ball-room, this great lady of fashion passed me, as it were, almost leading her daughter along by her side. And as the girl passed me, I just caught the words: "Mamma's fault. I am broken-hearted."

That same winter another of my idols was smashed; and I learned a lesson which has stood me in good stead for these many years. I cannot help smiling now, though, as I read the dismal entry in my diary of how one of the beautiful *débütantes* of the season taught me that a love were better unsung than sung in discord—at least, in fashionable society.

As a bachelor, I may be ruled out of order for assuming any authority on the subject of love—by some as a hardened, crusty curmudgeon; by others as a sentimental dreamer, just according to their own ideals of the tender passion.

Be that as it may, time has not erased from my memory the way I told myself that a truly heroic passion was not understood in the cold, modern world when I learned that my act of devotion to the young woman under whose spell I had fallen had become the laughingstock of the younger set.

My good friend and patron, Ward McAllister, had introduced me to a young lady at Newport, who, though several years older than myself, immediately entrapped my devotion. In the secret recesses of my innermost soul I erected a pedestal, and placed her upon it. There I worshiped blindly, hopelessly, but withal secretly.

In the fall, when she had returned to her home in New York, it was my naïve desire to show this young woman what a truly heroic devotion meant, so I conceived the brilliant idea of a serenade—a bit of romance. I had heard of a Spaniard who played the guitar and sang love songs in his native language. Rash youth that I was, I employed him without first giving him a trial; but still in my state of mind I am not sure I would have known the difference. The bargain he drove was far from roman-

tic, and took a large part of my month's allowance—but what was that as against true romance?

Finally the night for the serenade arrived. It was bright moonlight, and warm for the lateness of the season. Most of the windows in the neighborhood were up. Stationing my troubadour under the window of the fair object of my affections, I myself took up a less romantic, but more secure, position under the front stoop of the adjoining house.

The Spaniard strummed his guitar and sang his love songs; and I must say that from under the porch, and in my highly receptive, not to say emotional, state of mind, they did not sound so bad—considering the moonlight and the pretty idea. Ah, those were great days!

But, imagine my horror a few days later when dining almost next door to the home of the captor of my heart, the hostess began to chaff the young lady about her admirer. Before all the laughing guests she told—not of a romantic youth who knew how to make love beautifully—but of "some poor, love-sick boy who had hired the most terrible guitar scraper to howl outside in the moonlight." The hostess had heard the story from my *inamorata* herself; but she had not the slightest idea that she was describing my own misdoings and putting me to the most excruciating tortures. I assure you my sensations were anything but pleasant as I tried to force a smile to accompany the laughs of the other guests.

But the supreme mortification was yet to come; for when the dinner was over, and my fair lady said good night, she remarked to me in an undertone:

"Do you see now what a goose you have made of yourself? Let that always be a lesson to you in life."

Ah, well, perhaps it is better that a few of the many idols of youth should be shattered; but the crash of that one remained with me a long time.

The Beau Brummel of New York at this time was Mr. Peter Marié, a bachelor of charming and original character. Of most cultivated tastes, he had spent a great deal of his time in study and

travel, in the course of his wanderings often picking up beautiful bibelots and other curios, of which he had a wonderful collection.

Any one receiving invitations to the delightful entertainments which he gave in his bachelor home was sure to find congenial friends and a flow of wit, which he always had the power of drawing out of others. He had the gift of turning the conversation into poetical channels, and when in a romantic mood would recite whole poems, for which he had a wonderful memory.

He gave a remarkable dinner one winter. The invitations sent out were all written in poetry, and the guests were asked to reply in verse. A most beautiful prize was to be given to the one who wrote the best poem in answer to the invitation. Rumor has it that Miss Lampson, now Lady Drummond, took the prize with a verse worthy of a longer life.

One of the most pleasant recollections of this period of my life was the Canadian snow fête at Montreal, to which a friend and myself had been invited by the club of Canadians who made it one of their big annual affairs. The clubhouse was situated on a high hill near the Canadian city, and many of the members arrived on snowshoes, swinging great torches over their heads in the rhythm of their songs. It was a scene I never shall forget. The moon,

rising above banks of pearl-gray clouds, bathed in her light the vast panorama of sweeping, snow-clad hills and moving figures. One could watch the coming of the guests from afar as they skimmed noiselessly down the mile-long slopes of virgin snow, their shadows sharply defined before them, and their snowshoes sending up little white clouds on either side as they sped along on winged feet.

After the sports and an excellent supper, the president announced a rule of the club, which was that all visiting strangers must tell a story, sing a song, or be tossed in a blanket. When it came to my turn, I felt that I should have broken up the meeting had I attempted a song, while the suddenness of this proposition and the excitement of the moment drove all thoughts of a story from my head. The only thing left for me was to consent to be tossed.

When I got into the blanket, the members struck up a sort of low dirge. While they sang thus, the president would suddenly raise his hand at a certain part of the chorus, and I would go toward the ceiling with sensations which my readers can well imagine. Then down I would come again, while the low strains of this dirge, instead of encouraging me, filled me with terror; for I knew that in a moment that dismal part of the chorus would be reached again, and a new flight in the direction of the ceiling would be begun.

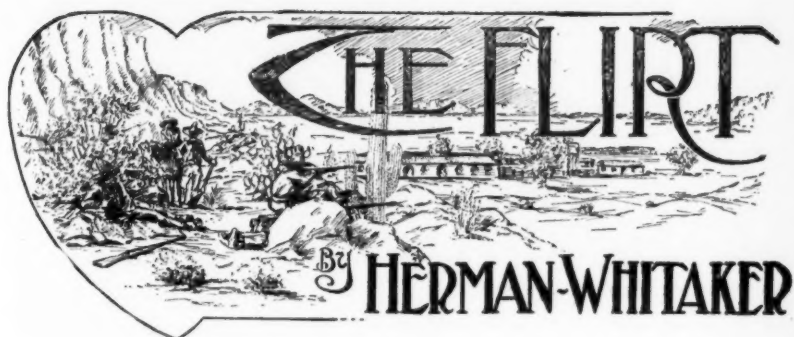
TO BE CONTINUED.



THE CLIMBER

SO eager was his heart to reach the heights
 That never can be scaled by sudden flights,
 He bade farewell to Love whose light-shooned feet
 Fail in the upward stress, the long day's heat;
 Farewell to Friendship, pausing now and then
 To pluck a spray of rest in brook-lulled glen;
 Farewell to Laughter telling o'er his tales,
 To cheerful Music echoing the dales.
 Too slow were they, for idling far too prone;
 He climbed the last still height—gray and alone!

ARTHUR WALLACE PEACH.



ATITUDES often express feeling more powerfully than words, and both the angle at which Martin Woods' laced miner's boots rested on the gallery rail and his elbows, widespread on shut fists, indicated pugnacious discontent. The upturn of his nose, hard-set jaw, lowering brows, all betokened anger and disgust too extreme to have been provoked by the spectacle of Mexican family life in the patio below. Though the brown señora, who was taking her siesta in the shade under the gallery, had conceded a little more clothing to the heat than is customary in colder climes, he had long ago grown to even more liberal sights. Neither could the robust snores of the señor, her husband, have upset his hardened nerves. To come to the point, his trouble lay just around the corner, where, behind an ambush of *petates* and palms, Adele Bevan was carrying on a violent flirtation with Ignacio Flores, a captain of Mexican rurales.

"The little fool!" he growled as the girl's low laugh floated out from behind the screen. "If it was only one of our own fellows I wouldn't mind—so much." He hastily made the emendation. "But to lower herself to a fellow like that—what *can* she see in him?"

Now, as a matter of fact, by an unprejudiced eye, a good deal was to be seen in the rural. Though Martin continually and disrespectfully alluded to him as "that little runt," he was not

small—as Mexicans go. Lithe and well built, he made a romantic figure in his rural's uniform of soft leather, striped and embroidered with silver and gold; and granted the beauty of his big, Spanish eyes, Adele was hardly to be blamed for trying to improve them with a stir of admiration.

And, undoubtedly, she had tried. Ever since, two days ago, they had come in from the mine, thirty miles away in the Sonora hills, she had afforded Ignacio every chance to improve a previous acquaintance. While Martin, her rightful escort, sulked in the hotel patio, she went coaching with the rural by day, accepted his arm for the plaza promenade at night, all of which had culminated in the aforesaid flirtation behind the screen. At least, so Martin judged it—and correctly, as was presently proved. He had no more than plunged, for the tenth time, into the stale pages of a year-old magazine before a sharp slap, following a brief scuffle, sent a hollow echo through the patio.

"How dare you?"

Almost as she exclaimed it, Martin shot in behind the *petates* where Adele stood, her pretty face aflame with anger and shame, close to the rural whose dark cheek still bore the red print of her hand. That one shrewd slap had waked in him an astonishing translation. Gone the oily veneer of Latin politeness, burned up by the furious anger. With his fine eyes diminished to small, black sparks behind the narrowed lids, his

face powerfully expressed the sinister and vicious.

"There is no understanding you *Americanos*." He paused as Martin appeared. Then, with an evil look, he continued: "You lead one on to——"

"You dirty cur!"

Unfortunately for himself, the rural was standing at the head of the wide stone stairs that led down from the gallery to the patio below; and, setting one foot back to brace himself against Martin's rush, he found only empty air. With one wild, upward clutch, he went backward, head over heels.

So sudden it was, Martin stood, gaping. Then, as he went to follow, Adele's arms took him around the neck from behind.

"Let me go!" he pleaded, struggling. "Let me go!"

But, roused from heated siestas by the first sounds of trouble, gringo miners were pouring from every room. When he broke her clasp, it was only to fall into the bear hug of big Pete Stofer, head engineer at the Santa Gertrudis.

"No, you don't, Martin, my man. You can clean him, I know, but just lay one finger on him, and he'll come right back for you with a couple of *gendarmes*."

"I can lick both him and his *gendarmes*."

"Of course you can." Stofer humored his anger. "But not the entire Mexican army. If two of them can't do it they'll get a company, then a regiment; but they'll get you in the end. Here, Gray, lend a hand with this jarned fool!"

Between them they hustled Martin, still fighting, into his room, where the giant proceeded to ladle out large doses of common sense.

"What if he did try to kiss her? All he got was a smack, and that's the very devil to a Mex. Then, not to mention the humiliation of it, I wouldn't have taken that tumble for all of the kisses my best girl has in stock. Besides, it won't pay. You and Bevan employ Yaquis altogether; and I reckon you haven't forgotten how this same fellow

rounded up Wilson's men and shipped them off to Yucatan, all because Wilson joshed him a bit one night at the American bar. You can't afford it, Martin."

Meanwhile, the rural was being dusted off by the *mozos* who had rushed to his aid. Though badly shaken and bruised, he waited at the foot of the stairs; and not until Martin had been forced away, and Adele vanished with a swish of white skirts, did he turn and walk quietly out through the patio gates.

Instead of halting—in the familiar fashion of the Mexican romance—at the nearest corner to look back and register his vows of vengeance, he passed straight down the sun-struck adobe street. Only once did he pause—to watch Martin's Yaqui muleteer pass with the mules he was bringing in from the river—and if Stofer had not observed it from the balcony of Martin's window, there would have been no one to interpret the threat in his glance.

"It's been the talk for a month that the governor was feeling poor, and we'd soon have another Yaqui round-up." The big fellow stated his suspicions. "Better look out for your men."

More than anything else, the news served to finish Martin's cooling.

"Luis is Adele's personal servant, and always takes his orders from her. I'll tell her at once."

As is quite common with young ladies who have burned slim fingers at fires from which they have been warned away, Adele, when she appeared at her door, covered her real contrition with an injured expression. But this flashed into quick alarm at his news, and, without waiting even to cover her head from the furious blast of the sun, she ran out with him to the mule patio and gave the Yaqui his orders.

"You will run, Luis, straight to the mine, and tell the *señor padre* to have a care for his men."

It required no more. Member of a race in whom suspicion has been raised to a dominant instinct by three centuries of war, the man dropped, at the first word, the hair hackamores he had just taken off the mules. At the last, he was gone. Leaping from an ox cart to the

top of the wall, he dropped over and ran down a back alley to the river, thereby avoiding the posse of rurales that filed out of the barracks' gate as he passed in its rear. Then, by devious ways from the river, he worked his way through the outlying ranches to the open desert.

It is hardly necessary to state that the appearance of the posse quarter of an hour later translated the last touch of Adele's despair into penitence, abject and complete.

"Just see what I have done!" she exclaimed, watching the posse's departure after a fruitless search. "Here I have stirred up fresh trouble for dad and you. Why *can't* I behave?"

"Constitutional defect, Del. You are born a flirt." Martin's answer explains their status. "There's safety for you only in marriage. If you had jumped the train with me yesterday as I wanted, we should have been married in Nogales this morning, and this never would have happened. Take warning and go today."

The sparkle in the eyes she turned up to him showed that natural mischief was not yet in total eclipse.

"It is so nice of you to give me a second chance; and, if I were anything else than a blasé divorcee, I should be inclined to accept. But as I am—well, it's too much to expect anything so nice and fresh. I shall continue my unselfish labors on behalf of the nice girl who will some day be your wife."

"Humph!" His snort of indignation aroused the brown señora who had slept peacefully through the rurales' raid. "Divorcee, indeed! As if everybody didn't know the facts! As for being blasé—under your superficial sophistication, Del, you are still a simple girl."

"Thanks for the compliment. 'Simple!' Vide Webster's Unabridged; 'rustic, foolish.' On the contrary, I am very deep and wise—ideals all gone to smash, nothing left but a greedy desire for wealth. If I marry again it will be with a millionaire. In the meantime, to keep in practice, I shall have to flirt with you."

"You'll marry me," he growled. "And that pretty soon."

While they were talking, a distant bugle call sounded down street at the barracks; but as the hot days were spaced by similar calls, neither of them dreamed of its having special significance. From Adele's balcony, an hour later, they could have seen a troop of rurales fording the river at sundown. But they were then at dinner, and by the time they came out the troop had passed from sight.

Far ahead of it, however, Luis, the Yaqui, was speeding along at a pace that would have killed a horse, for the spread toes of his naked feet took firm hold of the sand. While he was going, a murky sunset overlaid the dusty sage and mimosa with washes of rose and gold; and, when they faded, a full moon spread the desert with a carpet of palest silver. Presently a dark line along the east grew into a range of black hills against the dim sky. An hour later his tireless run carried him among the grass huts where slept his fellow Yaquis, and a minute thereafter he knocked at the door of John Bevan's house.

Almost immediately it opened; and, broken by twenty years of Mexican mining to every kind of violent risk, the mining engineer vouchsafed merely a nod of his grizzled head to the news.

"Coming again, eh? Well, we'll fool them. What time did you leave, Luis? Late afternoon? And you ran all the way? Then they can't possibly get here before midnight. Call the major domo and tell him to get the men away. And have them stay away," he called after him, "till the flag goes up."

Thus it was that, when Ignacio and his troop drew in from all around at dawn, they found only Bevan, his Chinese cook, and Maria, Adele's Mexican maid, within their circle; and no Mexican could have beaten Bevan in the quantity or quality of his shrugs.

"The full crew were here last night," he answered Ignacio's question. "But now they are gone—no one knows when or where. But why do you seek them?" And he stoutly contradicted Ignacio's charge that his men had been out marauding among the Mexican haciendas. "No, señor. Not one of them has left

the mine for at least six months. You are certainly mistaken."

"*Carambara!*" It will have to serve for the wicked oath with which Ignacio expressed his venomous disappointment. "Thus is it always with you gringos. 'My men are peaceful folk,' that is your cry; but in the meantime the murders and plunder go merrily on. Not till the murderous dogs turn against yourselves will you allow them to be aught but sheep. But, then—none so vociferous as you in denouncing the incapacity of the rurales. But there will come an end." Riding away, he repeated it over his shoulder. "There will come an end, señor. Some day, like the Señor Belton and his family, you and yours will be found with your throats cut in your beds."

"Another holdup." Watching them go over the desert sands, Bevan interpreted the raid in the light of previous experience. "I might just as well ride in to the governor and find how much he wants."

"Let's go for a walk, Del. It is light as day outside."

On the evening of the following day, Martin called out the invitation from the veranda where he sat smoking. Excepting the cook and Mexican maid they were alone in the camp, for, meeting them coming in as he went out, Bevan had cautioned them against hoisting the flag until his return.

As a matter of principle, Martin had chafed openly that morning at the forced inaction; but secretly he had found it anything but unbearable. Having nothing else to do, he had filled in the day replacing worn machinery with new parts, and, after exacting an oath against all attempts at love-making, Adele had consented to act as helper, handing him tools and bolts, adding her shapely weight to his whenever extra leverage was required. Clad in a blue jumper, her skirts tucked into voluminous overalls, fair hair escaping all around the brim of a machinist's cap, she had looked so distractingly pretty, however, that Martin had balanced on the brink of perjury all day. Yet virtue

had its reward, for now she consented to his plea.

"It is dreadfully improper, I suppose," she said, coming out. "But I long ago shocked Maria beyond further shame, and Sun Look doesn't see or care. Besides, I'm old enough to be your mother."

She was not altogether joking, for a good deal of the maternal did enter into her feeling toward him—as, for matter of that, it does in the love and likings of all true women. From the day, over a year ago, that she had returned after a brief and unhappy essay in matrimony to keep her father's house at the mine, she had cared equally for Martin, his second in command, overseeing his laundry, watching his health, bossing him scandalously, but always—as he was perfectly ready to admit—for the good of his soul and body. None knew better than he who was responsible for his stubborn resistance to the degenerate influences that drag a white man in hot countries down to tropical levels. Nevertheless, at times, when he would have preferred to arouse in her quite a different feeling, he found her mothering rather provoking. He vented his indignation now in a characteristic snort.

"Well, I like that! I'm three years older than you."

"That means seven years younger—for a man." She sighed plaintively. "It is cruel of you to remind me. However, I'll forgive you. Come on, but remember—no spooning!"

"What? Waste this lovely moonlight?"

"Swear!"

He laughed.

"All right, it's a swear."

He tried, too, to keep faith, and did until, having passed the stamp mill, black and weird in its unaccustomed silence, they threaded their way through the jumble of Yaqui huts and paused on a rise that commanded a view of both the hills and moonlit desert. Then—blame it to the picture her tawny hair and soft flesh tones made in the tender light rising out of a dress of billowy white—he fell.

"Adele!"

The intonation was sufficient. She interrupted at once.

"Faithless!"

"But——"

"Exactly—but."

"Just one word," he pleaded, "and I'll quit—forever if you'll give a true answer to a single question. If you really don't like me enough to marry me——"

"But I do."

Her emphasis left him gasping.

"Then why in the name——"

"Because, as I have already told you, I intend to be sensible this time and marry riches."

"Well, that's me."

"Are you a millionaire?"

She looked at him, head daintily askew, violet lights of her eyes full of merriment. But he stoutly held his ground.

"I'm going to be."

"That's what they all say."

"And I mean it. But, anyway, that doesn't count. Del, please stop this fooling. Not in a thousand years could you persuade me that you are mercenary. If you really love me——"

"Horrors!" Her hands fluttered like white butterflies in the moonlight.

"What is the boy saying!"

"Well, didn't you confess it, that you liked me enough——"

"Not to marry you. Having made one man miserably unhappy—at least, he said I did——"

"The liar!"

"I intend to be merciful," she went on quietly, "and spare you. But this is treachery to the nice, sweet girl for whom I am training you. I have made such a good job so far that I wouldn't dare——"

"Take the risk of any one spoiling it," he supplied, and was going on, but stopped as she suddenly grasped his arm.

"Isn't something moving there, Martin?"

The shallow, lateral valley which ran from their feet back to the high hills was so thickly dotted with paloverde and ghostly columns of giant *sugaras* that he found it difficult, at first, to tell.

But presently he, also, made them out; dark, running shapes that moved from bush to bush, utilizing every scrap of cover to mask their approach.

"Can't be troops." Martin shook his head at her suggestion. "There's no flash of metal among them. It might be our Yaquis. But they would not come like that—unless—— Oh, pshaw! I'd stake my life on Luis; and the others have been with us too long to play any tricks. They are either strange Yaquis from the interior hills or Mexican bandits; but in either case we have no time to lose. Come on, and run your hardest."

While running, hand in hand, back through the village, he added, for her comfort:

"The stockholders were inclined to kick at the expense of a concrete house; but, thank God, we forced it through. Old Sun Look, too, is a born fighter; used to be a 'hatchet man' in the 'tong' wars of San Francisco. For sheer, devilish, ice-cold courage, your fighting Chinaman has 'em all skinned; and, if they should be out for trouble, we can easily stand them off. But they may prove to be friends."

Almost as he spoke the question was decided; for just then first one then other figures appeared, blackly silhouetted on the ridge they had just left. As they ran up the steps of the house, a yell rose in their rear, then, after a spatter of rifle fire, bullets whined high overhead.

"Now shoot and be darned!" Martin gasped it while slamming the three iron swing bars across the oaken door. "Douse your light, Sun, and get your guns."

The shots had brought the Chinaman hurrying from the kitchen. Though his queue, flapping slippers, loose-flowing clothes expressed peace almost womanish, the last flash of the lamp revealed his eyes; vicious, snapping spots of black and white. His voice issued with a chuckle from the following darkness:

"What you catch, Miste' Martin? Bad Yaqui?"

"That or bum Mexican. Take a rifle with you to the back windows and

let fly at everything that moves. I'll take the south side. You, Adele, had better stay here."

"No, I shall go with you." Apart from a little gasp due to the run, her voice was quiet and firm.

"But you might get hit," he protested.

"So might you. Give me a rifle; you know I can shoot."

"That's the girl!" But while voicing his admiration he did not yield. "But you can do most good by remaining here. They are sure to attack on all sides, and it will be up to you to give us timely notice."

"In that case I'll stay."

And stay she did. While Maria Guadeloupe knelt clutching her skirt, she watched the flashes burst out in new places till they completely circled the house. Realizing, moreover, from their incessant firing that Martin and Sun were being kept busy on their respective sides, she did not bother them with reports. Lying down on the floor, with rifle trained across the stone sill, she opened fire herself from a slit in the half-closed shutters.

The report of her rifle, indeed, gave him first notice that their investure was full and complete. Startled and afraid for her, he came rushing—only to receive her quiet reassurance:

"It's nothing. One of them got a little too impertinent. Tried to gain cover under that bunch of paloverdes. I shot right through it; and I rather think that I got him. Go back to your window. I can take care of this side."

At the door, however, she called him back for a last word. Her eyes, for once, lacked their usual mischief. Falling through the slit in the shutters, a band of moonlight lit her face, quiet and serious within its aureole of bright hair.

"Martin, I wanted to tell you that—I really cared."

With the last hesitant word she was snatched out of the moonlight by his sudden hands. But there was still light enough for Maria—who was praying volubly to her namesake, the Virgin of Guadeloupe—to watch with bulging eyes the spectacle of love-making going

on to a sputtering accompaniment of rifle fire.

"Now you must go." She pushed him away at last. "But first I want you to promise—if they rush us——"

"They'd never dare," he interrupted, "in this bright moonlight."

"But the moon sets in another hour. You can't fool me, dear boy. Then they will come. So I want your promise—that you'll shoot me if they break in."

"But they can't. The windows are heavily barred, the door three inches of solid oak."

"I hope so; but you know the proverb about 'the unexpected'? Will you—in the last resort?"

She spoke simply, in the same quiet tone she might have addressed a question concerning his laundry; and he was even less demonstrative, for he merely thrust out his hand. But their very quiet was more impressive; strong feeling pulsed in her thanks.

"Now I don't care."

Shortly thereafter he went back to his own window; but not before Maria had witnessed and wondered again at the abandon of a love that seemed utterly oblivious of bullets and possible death; and was, of course, unconscious that the "unexpected" was even then in course of preparation.

It required, however, the black darkness that fell like a pall over the house after the moon's setting to bring it to a head. It was rendered even more sinister by the dead silence that followed a sudden cessation of the firing. While they watched, straining to pierce the darkness that seemed to palpitate with moving shapes, an occasional stir, scrape of a foot, rolling pebble told that not all were imaginary. Unable to distinguish between the real and the unreal, they, also, ceased firing; just lay at their respective windows until, with a flash and rending roar, the unexpected arrived.

As he leaped to his feet, the thought shot through Martin's mind: "They got to our dynamite."

Simultaneously with the explosion, a score of torches leaped like sudden flowers in the night outside; and, falling through a wide breach in the kitchen

wall, their red glare stained the body of Sun Look, lying just where he had been thrown against the opposite wall. Also it illumined the dark faces of half a hundred Yaquis who were crowding in through the breach.

As under a lightning flash Martin saw it all through a wide gap in the partition wall between him and the kitchen, for the next second he went down, felled by a falling beam.

His consciousness returned, it seemed to him, in a second; but it was really more than a minute. In his ears rang the wild shrieks Maria was pouring forth in the next room; and his eyes opened on the spectacle of Adele, struggling fiercely in the arms of a Yaqui. The glare of two torches held by others showed her face, set and white; and, though she saw him rise and stagger drunkenly forward, she gave no cry, just continued her breathless struggle. As he went down again under a heavy blow from behind, her face, in its mute, white desperation, was stamped on his brain. He did not hear the burst of rifle fire that suddenly broke outside.

Dawn was breaking behind the black hills when his eyes opened again; and by that first dim light he was just able to make out Adele's face hovering close to his own. A great anxiety had replaced its white desperation; but this now gave way to immense relief.

Her cry brought not only Luis, her Yaqui *moso*, but also Sun Look, who, with his head bound up in a cloth, was still trying to retrieve certain copper utensils from the ruins of his kitchen.

"Now, lie still." She gently pressed Martin's head back to her lap. "If you'll be good, I'll tell you all. Luis brought up our men in the nick of time, and everything is all right. Even Sun Look escaped with a headache and a few bruises."

"Our men? I thought——"

"That they were attacking? So did I; but we did them a great wrong. It was Ignacio Flores and his men, dressed up like Yaqui miners. Instead of returning to town, they made a circle and hid in the hills. But Luis was watching

them, and when they marched on the mine he followed with his people."

"Si, señor." The Yaqui nodded. "Nor is it the first time that Ignacio has played this trick. Whenever he lost at the gaming, or wished to make up his pilferings from the stores, what so easy as to sack some Mexican hacienda or gringo mine, then round up a few hundred Yaquis and sell them into the Yucatan slavery as the doers of the deed? But he will never do it more."

"Then he is——"

"Killed," Adele answered. "With nearly the half of his men, and the Yaquis are still trailing the others through the hills. I'm afraid that not one will escape."

"And I, too, will have to go, señor," Luis added. "At the very beginning I sent a man to inform the Señor Bevan so that he might bring out the comandante himself to catch Ignacio in his act. But caught or not, 'twill not be good for any Yaqui found here when he arrives."

His caution sprang from innumerable treacheries; but, if he were right, no one would have dreamed it in the face of the comandante's spluttering indignation when, some two hours later, he arrived. Spurning the body of Ignacio with his foot, he gave scornful orders to the burial squad that were carrying away his men.

"Take this dog and throw him in with the rest."

Also he was very sympathetic.

"If you will send in your bill of damages," he told Bevan, taking leave, "I will see to it that you are recouped. And if there be anything else——"

"There is." It was Adele who put in the saucy interruption. "If you will leave our Yaquis alone hereafter so that the mine may be run in peace——"

"'Tis granted without the asking." He raised his gold-laced sombrero. "They shall never be molested again."

And now Martin, who had been walking around the last hour, excepting a sizable headache, not much the worse for his double clout, stepped to the bat.

"If you will allow us a few minutes

to bring out our horses, señor, the señora and I will accept your escort into town?"

Adele turned on him, puzzled.

"Into town? For what?"

"To take the train north to be married, of course."

"To be married?" While the old mischief made little eddies of her dimples, she cried: "Why, it is absurd! Father would never allow it. Would you, dad?"

But, for the first time in his life, the good man said her nay.

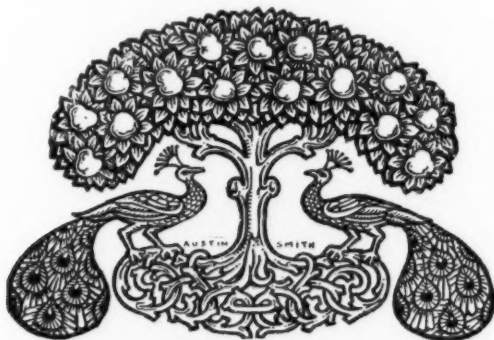
"Glad to be rid of you both. Off with you, and stay at least a month. I'll have the house fixed up again by the time you get back."

"But," she put in a last mischievous objection, "I never said that I would marry you."

"I know you didn't; but please don't be impolite and keep the comandante waiting. We can argue that out on the way."

And, with an air of delighted discovery, she replied:

"Why, so we can."



A CANTICLE OF GREAT LOVERS

TOO long have I played me the gay little games,
 And laughed out the dusk with the nice little men,
 Daintily capered through minuets over
 Thy tablets of vast inerasable names—
 Gaunt Dante, and Petrarch, and Jarl of the Fen,
 Rossetti, and gold Aucassin, and Red Rover,
 Whose love was of genius, whose spirits were flames.
 Yea, Lord, I have mocked them, again and again.
 Lord, canst even Thou make of me a Great Lover?

Is *she* not worthy of greatness, or glory,
 Raptures of visioning, murmurous song?
 I have but laughter and tales of the road.
 Lord, let me *serve* her; I will not forsake her.
 Once she may summon my leather-cased sword,
 Once she may smile at a wayfaring story,
 Glad of my jest when the journey is long.
 Lord, let me trudge by her, bearing her load.
 Call me her comrade, Lord. Let me but make her
 Laugh when the highway is dusty, O Lord!

SINCLAIR LEWIS.

A MAIDEN IN DISTRESS



ANNA ALICE CHAPIN

T was a really beautiful July afternoon, and Guy Meredith simply bubbled with high spirits and with the milk of human kindness. He was twenty-five, heart-whole, and healthily good-looking; and he was trying out his new motor car. Could any combination of conditions on earth be more entirely satisfying? He was, in fact, supremely contented with himself, with the car, with the weather, with the world in which he so joyously lived. There was not a single fly in his ointment, no rift within the sound lute of his being; if any of his dolls were stuffed with sawdust he did not know it.

If he had not been a constitutional optimist, he would have taken warning from the very hopefulness of his circumstances. One of the most disillusioning facts of life is that fate never makes us completely happy except as a prelude to a cataclysm; but such a notion would have seemed to Guy morbid and ungrateful—rank heresy to the unanalytical joy in life which thumped so cheerfully in his hardy veins.

The car, he decided, was a peach. It was a pity that he hadn't asked some other chap along. He felt no end of a hog to be having such a tiptop, corking time all by his lonesome. He had leisure to feel passing spasms of compassion for all the other people he met, because they hadn't his A-1, gilt-edged, superlative automobile—pleasant compassion, of course, largely composed of boyish arrogance. But he would really

have liked to share his pleasure; so far he was sincere.

He looked hopefully along the high-road for some one he knew; but, of course, there wasn't any one. Why should there be? Most of his pals owned cars of sorts, or horses; and, anyhow, this was not a beaten way that led to any country club; but a rustic, though well-kept byroad, with which he was quite unfamiliar.

Though he was close to the New York suburbs, it was still real country. It was a pretty road, winding along through sunny fields and sudden, dark-green patches of woodland, past sleepy old farmhouses and occasional garden-inclosed country places. The summer heat lay not too heavily on the pleasant, fertile land; the song of birds penetrated even the voice of his own motor; the warm smell of grass mounted to him through the fumes of the gasoline.

He fell to thinking of the girl he had seen at the garage while he was waiting for his car to be gotten ready. She was—of course!—different from the usual run of feminine creatures; daintier, yet subtly more daring. She had darting brown eyes with gold in them, and her hair was the same alluring mixture of shadow and sunshine. Her rose-colored automobile veil brought out the warm color of her lips.

They had chatted for a full minute with the frankness of well-bred, healthy-minded young people, and she had recommended this road to him as being "good going," as well as pretty

and romantic. She had left the garage before he did; and he had noticed that she knew how to run a machine like an old hand. A girl taking out a big Winton like that, all alone! The sporting quality of it appealed to him. He wished that he knew her name.

Further than this, he wished vaguely that he could have an adventure; not necessarily a sentimental one, or, if sentimental, only incidentally so. He wanted to be a knight-errant; the job looked easy, and always earned lots of credit. He thought of rescues from burning buildings, runaway horses, cruel relatives. A maiden in distress! That was it, a maiden in distress! There was something very taking in the idea of a maiden in distress.

The maidens he knew were mostly very well looked out for, thank you! Keen, sensible, happy young girls—they'd be a jolly sight more likely to get him out of a scrape than he them!

This depressed him. He slowed down the machine to the better accompany his subdued mood, while he ruminated, after the manner of healthy and fortunate lads in moments of introspection, upon his own monumental uselessness! A hulk! A hearty hulk! Six feet two of blooming carcass, eating its head off! His metaphors struck even his own uncritical sense. What was he good for? Football, and spending money. Oh, Lord! And running a car. Say, it was a pippin of a car, and no mistake!

The spell of humility was broken. He chuckled, and played with his new toy for quite half an hour, happily trying speed after speed. Then he whistled: "My Girl's a High-born Lady!" and looked about him.

He was running slowly, the indicator at about twenty. He had been experimenting with that odd, sensory illusion which arises from a big shift in speed. To go from fifty miles an hour to thirty-five is to be convinced that you are crawling at a footpace. To drop from sixty to twenty is to experience the momentary delusion that you have stopped entirely.

The road now led almost entirely through woods; wonderfully clean, or-

derly woods at which he marveled. Then he recalled indifferently that there was a very rich chap who lived somewhere up this way who had a famous deer park. What was his name? Ledyard? Ledyard?

His attention was suddenly arrested by a faint hail from the roadside. He brought the machine to an unceremonious standstill, and stared bewildered in the direction of the voice.

There on a bank of purple asters and Queen Annes sat the mysterious Girl of the Garage. Her motor coat was dusty, her rose-colored veil was limp; there was a slight smudge on her pretty nose, and she was crying very softly and attractively. From time to time she rubbed her face with a squashed-up, little handkerchief and sobbed pathetically.

Guy was out of his car in a moment. Talk about maidens in distress! Well, I ask you!

"Oh, I say," he gasped, "you mustn't do that. You—you'll make yourself sick, you know!"

He remembered dimly a formula of his stormy childhood, when he had been wont to weep with temper.

The girl looked at him with all the gold washed out of her brown eyes.

"They've gone!" she wailed. "He's taken them! He's taken every one!"

"Who's taken them? Taken what?"

Guy mechanically handed her his own handkerchief, with which she began to rub her face once more, crushing the other into the pocket of her motor coat.

"If"—she choked—"if you've a single atom of pluck, you'll help me get them back!"

The onslaught was so sudden and fierce that Guy jumped.

"Rather!" he said promptly. "I don't know what you want, but we'll get it sure!"

The girl stopped crying, and regarded him appraisingly. Apparently she liked his merry gray eyes and clean, lean young face, for she nodded, as though with lugubrious satisfaction.

"Is that a fast car?" she demanded irrelevantly.

"Well, pretty fast," said Guy, with

assumed nonchalance. "I've only taken her at seventy-two so far, but I think she'll go faster."

The brown eyes lit up faintly.

"Fine for you!" she exclaimed, as though involuntarily. "It will beat mine!"

"Your car?"

"Yes."

She got up onto her feet with his help. Guy looked about him.

"Where is it, by the way?"

"He took it, too—the brute!" said the girl savagely.

Guy shook his head despairingly.

"See here," he said politely but firmly. "I'm only too—too honored to be allowed to help you in any way I can, you know; but, really, you'll have to tell me what it is all about. That's only playing the game, you know."

"You won't take a risk with your eyes shut!" she said scornfully. "You don't trust me!"

The words jarred on Guy. He colored uncomfortably as he said:

"I don't know what you want me to do; that's all."

"A man held me up just now," she said, "and stole a jewel case full of the most valuable unset rubies in America."

Guy gasped, but a thrill ran through his veins. He had been hankering for an adventure. Was ever an adventure so exciting, so extraordinary as this? He stammered incoherent questions, but the girl cut in upon them.

"Let's start," she said. "I can tell you as we go. He has only ten minutes' start. We can overtake him in that car in no time."

Almost without his own volition, Guy found himself helping her into the machine, and beginning to crank up. In a moment they were under way, but now he had found his voice and his reasoning faculty.

"But don't you think that we'd better stop somewhere and telephone ahead to a station house?" he suggested. "We are almost in city limits, you know. Anyway, this isn't a matter for us to handle. It needs the police."

"You're afraid!" she flashed at him, again hitting the wrong note.

"I'm exceedingly afraid that you will lose your jewels," he said stiffly. "How on earth did you come to carry them about with you alone, anyway?"

"I was taking them up here to my uncle," she began volubly. "I went down into town and got them out of the safe for him. He wanted to show them to some collector who was coming to dinner."

"Then your uncle lives around here somewhere?"

"Yes. He is Mr. —" She hesitated. "Mr. Ledyard."

"Ledyard! The man who owns the deer park? Oh, then, Miss—Miss—"

"Ledyard."

"Miss Ledyard, the best thing for us to do is to go right to your uncle and tell him all about it. Where is the entrance to the grounds?"

He began to slow up, but she laid a quick hand on his arm.

"Oh, you don't understand!" she exclaimed. "He—he is away for the day; and, anyway, he would never—never forgive me for losing them! He values them so—so terribly! And he thinks it is dreadful of me to go about alone as I do, and—"

"Well, it is!" said Guy encouragingly.

"Why should I be afraid of being alone?" she cried proudly. "I am armed!"

She produced a small, perfect revolver, mounted in silver and ivory.

"It doesn't seem to have helped you much this time," remarked Guy dryly.

All the same, the sight of the little weapon gave him an odd feeling. He began to wonder whether he could handle this business alone without the aid of the police. Romance was tempting Guy Meredith. He could hear her insidious whisper in his ears.

He hardly noticed the rest of the girl's explanation and account of the holdup till he caught the words:

"And uncle has such a horror of publicity! Oh, think if I lost his rubies and gave the thing into the hands of the police and the papers—I really think that he would never speak to me again! Oh, Mr.—"

"My name's Guy Meredith!"

"Dear Mr. Meredith, won't you help me?"

She clasped her hands and leaned toward him. She was just a shade more *empressée* than his girl friends usually were; but, then, she was overwrought, of course, from her terrible experience.

Besides, it is easy for five-and-twenty to forgive a pretty girl for being a bit overdemonstrative.

"All right," said Guy, recklessly committing himself. "Give me that Gatling gun of yours, and we'll see what we can do without the strong arm of the law."

She clapped her hands joyfully; and, with the little revolver in his coat pocket, Guy, too, felt a glow of exhilaration steal over him from head to foot.

There was no doubt about it; the adventure had begun!

They sighted a car ahead, and, without looking at her, Guy felt that his companion stiffened a trifle, as though bracing herself. Yes! It was a Winton—he saw that in another moment; but she touched his arm quickly and shook her head.

"That's not the right one!" she cried in his ear.

"But it's your car!"

"It isn't! It isn't!" she exclaimed violently. "Pass it. Please do as I say, and pass it!"

They snorted past at a rate of forty miles an hour; and Guy caught a glimpse of a white fox face half hidden by a turned-up collar. Turned up on a day like this!

"You're sure?" said Guy.

"Of course I'm sure!" She was frowning; a brighter color rose in her cheeks. "Don't you suppose there are other Wintons on this road?"

"Yes; but it's funny, just the same!"

On a straight bit he slowed down a shade, and turned to look back dubiously. To his surprise, the other car had put on speed, and was following them steadily about fifty yards in the rear.

"It's funny!" repeated Guy Meredith again.

But his cogitations were stopped abruptly by the girl's low cry.

"There!" she gasped. "At last! Oh, can't you hurry? Look at your speed-

ometer; it's only at forty-five. There's a village just beyond—see the spire! We must catch him in that wooded stretch ahead."

Forty-five—fifty. The needle wavered at fifty for a minute; then suddenly swept around to fifty-five—sixty.

"We can't keep it up on this road," said Guy quietly. "Jove! The fellow's going it, too!"

She was leaning far forward, panting with excitement. There was a look he did not entirely admire in her eyes. He had seen it on the face of a woman he knew, on a deer hunt.

"Diana!" he said, half laughing; but the flame of her eyes reproached him for joking at such a moment as this.

Sixty-five miles an hour! And the race was over. Instinctively Guy sounded his motor horn, and the driver of the second Winton turned with a hasty backward glance.

"Why did you do that?" snapped the girl. "Giving him warning!"

"Well, I don't want to kill him. Steady! We'll jolt a little when we let up on this!"

The car ahead swerved out politely, and Guy's big machine swung in beside it at a miraculously slower gait. Breath for breath the two cars pounded along abreast.

The driver of this Winton was a thickset man with an iron-gray mustache; not the usual type of crook, obviously. The most suspicious thing about him was the surly, anxious way in which he eyed them.

"Hi!" he shouted. "D'you want to kick me into the ditch?"

"Maybe!" yelled back Guy cheerfully.

He was, in fact, maneuvering on a slant which badly crowded the other car. They were going gently now, and there was little danger; but it was uncomfortable for the Winton, and Guy could see that the thickset man was swearing heartily. In another second he had put on his brake, and was ten feet behind them, at a standstill. Guy promptly backed, swerved, and came to a stop himself.

"What in——" began the Winton driver hotly; and at the same moment he saw the revolver in Guy's hand. "Oh, damn!" he said.

He made a tentative movement toward his own pocket, but thought better of it.

"I've been expecting this!" was his next remark.

He looked at the man and girl as though he could have flayed them both.

"That's lucky!" said Guy, in loud and cheerful accents.

The girl pressed closer to him, and he could feel her trembling slightly. He proceeded with easy confidence:

"Hand 'em over!"

"What?" snarled his victim.

"What? Lord, how much swag do you carry, anyhow? The rubies, my innocent old friend, if you please!"

"The rubies!" repeated the other, in a voice of anguish. Then he groaned, and shook his head as though accepting the inevitable. "I've been expecting this. Oh, damn!" he said again.

"Will you give 'em up?" demanded Guy impatiently.

"Give them up! Of course, you chuckle-headed, ape-faced, swindling blackguard! Of course I'll give 'em up! What d'you think I am? Bullet proof?"

"I guess," said Guy to the girl, in a businesslike manner, "you'd better go and get 'em yourself. He won't cheat you, and I'll keep him covered."

"You bet he won't cheat me!" said she, with astonishing vulgarity, and straightway clambered down and marched upon the enemy.

If he had any desire to demur, he apparently dismissed it after a glance at the knight-errant's firmly pointed hand. He appeared a sensible old fellow, in spite of his choleric temperament and unfortunate avocation. When with the most graceful self-possession she put out her hand and stood waiting, his lips moved, and it was evident that he was swearing, and again swearing, albeit inaudibly. But at last, with a heavy sigh, he produced a Russia leather case, and handed it over.

The next moment, as Guy momentarily relaxed his vigilance, he dexter-

ously whipped out a revolver. But, before he could aim it, the young man's voice checked him sharply.

"Hi, there!" he said. "I'm still on the job. Easy with the self-defense business."

The girl had returned to Guy's auto by this time, and now climbed in nimbly, but without flurry.

"All right," she said sweetly. "We can leave him now, I think."

"Well, I don't know," mused Guy. "I think he'd better go and bury his gun first. Revered sir, will you kindly fire that plaything of yours over the fence?"

The plethoric gentleman for the third time said: "Damn! I've been expecting this!" and did as he was told.

"You must pitch a good ball," Guy commented critically, pocketing his own weapon. "It's a horrible thing," he proceeded, with severity, "to see a man of your age in this sort of position!"

"Rub it in, do!" said his adversary darkly. "I know I'm a pinhead. Rub it in well!"

"I'm ashamed of you," said Guy. "I really am ashamed of you!" He suddenly noted that Miss Ledyard's face was buried in her hands, and that her shoulders were shaking. "I know you've been through a lot," he said to her soothingly; "but you mustn't be hysterical!"

At this point, the first Winton suddenly rolled placidly around the corner, into the little glade. Guy had a confused sense of bewilderment. He had forgotten the thing. What on earth had it been doing all this time? Even as he queried, it halted. The fox-faced, pallid man leaned from the wheel, idly curious.

"Which of you's broken down?" he demanded.

"I have," said the thickest man, looking suddenly hopeful. "These tramps have attacked me, sir!"

"What an outrage!" shrilled the girl.

"Attacked!" cried Guy. "Let him just go to the police station and say that!"

"Watch me!" shouted the irate gentleman. "Will you come, too, you——"

He paused to think of a suitable epithet.

"An excellent idea," said the newcomer.

Guy looked puzzled. Why on earth should the thief wish to go with him to the police station?

The girl in his motor clasped her hands.

"Oh, the publicity!" she sighed. "My poor uncle!"

"I think maybe you'd really better," Guy advised her pleadingly. "You see it is pretty irregular what we've done, and—"

"But you can't really think that that highwayman will really go with you to see the police!" she cried.

"He will if he starts with me," said Guy, setting his youthful jaw. "I don't think he'll get away from me."

"I bet you—I bet you my pistol," said the young lady, with a gleam in her eye, "that you don't get the robber to the police station!"

"Take you!" said Guy. "Come on, you colossal old bluff! Climb into my car."

"I won't! You'll kidnap me!" exclaimed the thickset man indignantly.

"Not I! I wouldn't have you for a gift. But I want your society badly."

"I can't bear to have him in the car with me!" complained the girl, with a shudder.

Guy gave a shrug of despair. If that wasn't like a "maiden in distress!"

The man in the first Winton came unexpectedly to the rescue.

"I can give the lady a lift if she doesn't care to escort the crook," he suggested civilly.

"Crook!" snarled the thickset man wildly.

That, in fact, was the final arrangement. The thickset man was obliged to abandon the Winton by the roadside and to get into Guy's car, while Miss Ledyard climbed up beside the fox-faced stranger.

"Good luck!" she called gayly to Guy. "Don't forget the bet!"

"She devil!" said the thief bitterly.

"How dare you!" cried Guy.

The two cars started forward. The next village, a suburban colony, was reached in five minutes, and Guy led the way to the local house of the law. At the door, he assisted his prisoner carefully out of the car, and kept a firm hand upon his arm while he looked about for the others. Clearly they had been delayed, for there was no sign of them.

Guy Meredith was not brilliant; and, though he was puzzled and a little troubled by this fresh development, he was not at all suspicious. So it was quite out of a blue sky that the bolt fell upon him, shattering in cataclysmic fashion his confidence, his self-esteem, and several other things.

It came so simply, too.

They were standing in front of the desk lieutenant, Guy very stern and watchful, the thickset man still purple with wrath.

"What charge?" said the lieutenant, and then gave a jump. "Why, hello, Mr. Ledyard!" said he warmly. "What have they been doing to you, sir?"

The station house swam before Guy's eyes. He pulled himself together in time to hear hurried orders flying about. Special officers were being fired out of the station like peas from a shooter. They were to catch those dangerous crooks or die in the attempt; and they must get back Mr. Ledyard's stolen rubies or they'd all be fired from the force.

"They're old hands!" declared the lieutenant, with conviction. "Faith, it's many the good haul they've made—specially among society folk. The girl does it fine, I've heard. This must have been a pretty careful plant, Mr. Ledyard."

"They evidently knew what kind of car I had when I was going to get the jewels and all that," said the thickset man. "But *this* is their accomplice. Make him talk—the low-down, rattle-boned, monkey-eyed jellyfish!"

Guy nodded his head and wiped his brow.

"I guess I'm all that, and then some," he acquiesced wearily. "I suppose I'm under arrest, but I can explain. All damn fools can explain. First of all,

will somebody kindly telephone Arnold Meredith—nine - two - four - three - six Plaza."

They never got the rubies. But, strange to say, Mr. Ledyard forgave him after a long time. Guy, however, never forgave himself, and he vowed that never, never would he forgive the "maiden in distress," who had so

cruelly hoodwinked and made use of him.

But he put the dainty pistol rather carefully away—he could not have said why—and in the bottom of his incurably romantic heart he wondered if he should ever see the owner again. He thought he owed it to his self-respect to cry quits with that plucky, conscienceless, alluring "maiden in distress."



AS TO LOVE

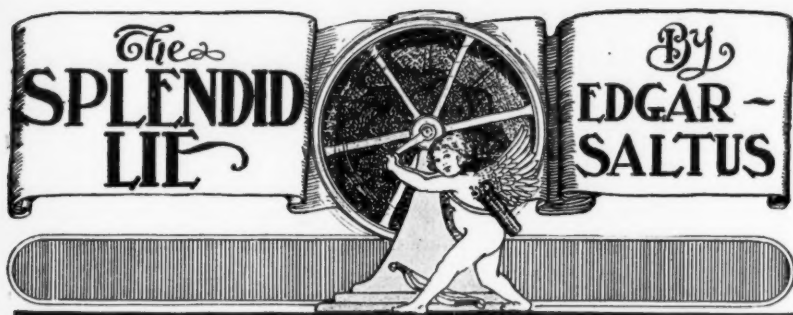
'TIS said that Love when all is done
Is but "two hearts that beat as one."
But that's not true, as I have found
When Love to visit me comes round:
For as he enters in my door
He makes one heart beat like a score,
Or more!

If I were teaching Love at school,
And to define it I were tasked,
I'd say
That 'tis an element by no means cool,
That comes our way,
Both night and day,
Unsought, unasked,
And as a rule
Makes man a hero or a fool.
And best of all it is so rich
He don't care which!

How shall I know him when I meet
Fair Love? The answer is complete,
Already to my hand: sunshine or storm
The symptoms are—heart overwarm,
A shivering spine, and truly arctic feet!

How tell one's Love? Ah, it were well
If so you rest beneath its spell
To let its gold
Remain untold,
For Love's a special kind of pelf
That soon or late will tell itself.
Yet, if it must be told, why, then,
Intrust it not to tongue or pen.
The better plan, oh, lover, faint but true,
Is just to let your two eyes speak for you.

JOHN KENDRICK BANGS.



THIS is Mr. Tatum." In the hall of the Athenæum Club an introduction was being effected. A young man was actively engaged in making his uncle acquainted with his future father-in-law. The latter was Mr. Tatum. The uncle was Mr. Farquhar, and the young man Harry.

There, barring the lady, you have what I think I have seen described as the *dramatis personæ*. The lady will appear in a moment. Though not, of course, in the hall where these three men were standing.

Two weeks previous Harry had crossed the ocean. On the way, chance, or the chief steward, had at table placed him side by side with the daughter of Mr. Tatum. The girl was pretty, she was endowed with superior health and manner, and, though reticent, could listen to anything worth listening to with glimpses of teeth as perfect as Harry remembered to have seen before. To provoke those glimpses Harry said whatever entered his head, which, I admit, was not much.

In spite of this, or, perhaps, precisely on that account, it so fell about that in the wide leasures of the voyage, companionship became pleasant to them both, so pleasant, indeed, that neither felt it could properly terminate with the journey, both concurring that it would be agreeable to take a longer trip, one in which not chance, or the chief steward, but matrimony should place them side by side.

Yet that perhaps was in the order of things. The girl was very fetching, and Harry was a nice-looking boy who came of what is known as the best people—those people who are still the best, in spite of plutocratic invasion. Such things count with a girl, particularly if she have money and social aspirations.

Miss Tatum had both, but not what is perhaps pretentiously described as position. Metropolitan hostesses never thought of asking her to their entertainments, for the excellent reason that, in a city like New York, where the few are obvious and the many obscure, she was an entirely unknown quantity.

Mr. Farquhar, Harry's uncle, was just the reverse. An old New Yorker, he had been everywhere, seen everything, known everybody. He had been interested in a number of ladies since dead and departed, and at balls and dinners related the fact to their daughters with tender calm. He was not only an old New Yorker, he was an old beau. As such he had two manners, one very gracious, the other equally remote. In the hall of the Athenæum Club it was the latter that he was displaying.

"Uncle Reginald, this is Mr. Tatum."

At the introduction, Mr. Tatum raised his hat, extended a hand, and smiled. Mr. Farquhar smiled also. But he did not seem to think it necessary to acknowledge the introduction in any other way. He kept his hat on his head, and his hands in his pockets.

Mr. Tatum was a large man, very stout, with a face like a brandied cherry.

It was dull red all over, except on his forehead, where there was a white scar. He mumbled something about the pleasure which he was experiencing. Mr. Farquhar made no reply. Harry said something to the effect that he was glad to bring his uncle and his future father-in-law together. Mr. Farquhar did not appear to have heard. But still he smiled.

Yet in that smile of his was a gleam as chill as the point of a sword. Before it suddenly the scar on Mr. Tatum's forehead flamed. He dropped his hand, replaced his hat, stalked to the door. Harry followed, saw him out, and returned to where his uncle stood.

"Have you lunched, Harry?" that uncle asked. "No? Very good! Then lunch with me. Your fat friend has given me an appetite."

"In that case," Harry angrily retorted, "I can't say that you seemed very grateful."

At this, Mr. Farquhar smiled as he had smiled before. Taking the nephew by the arm, he led him into what is perhaps the most elaborate breakfast room in New York.

"Suppose we sit here," Mr. Farquhar continued, indicating, as he spoke, a table at a window. "What would you say to a ragout à la Sardanapale and a glass of Moselle? Archibald," he added, turning to the head waiter, "will you see, please, that the ragout has saffron in it, and that the Moselle is not iced? Now," he resumed, when the waiter had gone, "this Mr.—er—Tatum is quite well off, I think you told me."

"Ten million," snapped Harry.

"His daughter, I presume, will come in for it all. Well, ten million is just enough to entertain on. Nowadays, a penny less and you are pinched. So-and-so used to say that no one could live like a gentleman on less than a thousand dollars a day. At four per cent, ten million will yield a trifle more. I can remember when twelve thousand a year was regarded as wealth. Times have changed, but not customs. Always it has been considered as easy to marry a rich girl as a poor one, besides being, as Major Pendennis remarked, much more

comfortable. By the way, you know of Hank Jones, don't you? The papers have been rather busy with him lately."

Harry, who had been looking out of the window, turned.

"The policy man? What of him?"

"Nothing. He occurred to me in connection with days—and nights—when living was less expensive. At the time, there were a number of gambling dens about here. The dealers represented a type which, like the epoch, has gone. They wore diamonds, dressed in black, and affected to be supremely apathetic. In those days Hank Jones was one of that sort."

"Here is the ragout," Harry, vaguely bored, interrupted.

"But there was," Mr. Farquhar continued, helping his nephew to some trifles and game, "there was nothing apathetic about Hank Jones, except, of course, in appearance, and in appearance only for appearance sake. He was a great hand at making a stranger feel at home, and then in taking that stranger's home away. A gift such as that is apt to lead to curious experiences. More than once it led him to jail.

"But he had other adventures. On one of those sumptuous April days of ours, which are not of the spring nor yet of the summer, but a mingling of both, a girl came sauntering before the Fifth Avenue Hotel where he stood. Whether or not she gave him so much of an invitation as may be conveyed in the quiver of an eyelid, I, for one, do not know. What I do know is that he followed her, spoke to her, joined her, and accompanied her to her parents' home. In a week she was—"

"I think I will take some of the Moselle," Harry, with a yawn, again interrupted.

"Help yourself, dear boy. Where was I? Oh, yes! In addition to the girl—whose name, if I have it correctly, was Arabella, and who, in becoming his wife, became also his cook—in addition to her he had an assortment of equally agreeable acquaintances. There was Johnny Slope, for instance, a plumber by trade, by practice a thief. There was Banjo Pete, a lively young fellow,

who, after vacating the minstrel world, had passed initiate into the high art of illuminating with dark lanterns. There was also George Percival, a poet, born without scruples, and who had neglected to acquire any. These friends of Jones' were all interested in policy. Through their aid, and through the aid of others similarly accomplished, he was multiplying joints all over town. If I am correctly informed, these amusements made him quite wealthy.

"Meanwhile, in the quarters over which Arabella presided, occasionally there were festivities. That brisk young Pete would bring his banjo, play he was Mr. Bones again, sing wonderful songs, and tell a rattling story. Johnny Slope—Mr. Slope in private life—would sometimes come with his lady, sometimes with his father, as nice a looking old gentleman as ever cracked a crib. There also Percival, with his poetic ways, would lounge by the hour."

"I'd like a bit of bread, please," Harry once more interrupted.

"Now, it so happened," Mr. Farquhar, reaching a plate to his nephew, continued, "that in the course of one of these festivities, Hank Jones was called away, and did not return until all the guests, save Percival, had gone. He was then just in time to hear Arabella call 'Help!' and to see Percival, with an arm about her. At once he was at him. But Percival dropped the girl, caught up a bottle, and struck him. Later, when Jones came to, Arabella had washed the blood away, but not the wound. Time itself has not obliterated it. The scar was quite visible when he was in the hall here a few minutes ago. Have another truffle?"

"What!" Harry cried. His anger had gone, his boredom with it. "Do you mean——"

"That Mr. Tatum and Hank Jones are one and the same? Why, of course I do. But I have not finished. There is an epilogue to the story. A fortnight after the bottle incident, Percival was assisted out of the world. Your fat friend was arrested for it, he was tried, and—never say you don't believe in miracles—was acquitted. It was then that

he changed his name. Professionally he remained Hank Jones, but for the private purposes of private life he developed into Mr. Tatum. After all, there is no law against it. Though, if there were, I hardly fancy it would trouble him. A little more of the ragout?"

"A-a-and you say," Harry stuttered. "Y-y-you say——" He did not seem to get any farther.

"Did you not hear me?" Mr. Farquhar asked. "Or would you wish me to tell it all over again? Yesterday, on receipt of the note in which you acquainted me with your engagement, I called on my old friend, the district attorney. It is the summary of his conversation that I have related to you.

"Interesting, isn't it?" Mr. Farquhar, after a momentary interlude with knife and fork, resumed. "In any event, your future father-in-law is certainly a fine old party. Though I admit, in the hall here, he looked so wretchedly ill, so manifestly apoplectic, that I felt really sorry for him. Now I feel sorry for his daughter."

"I'll chuck it," Harry morosely muttered. "And deuced hard luck it is. A nicer girl never lived."

To this, Mr. Farquhar, fully occupied now with the ragout, said nothing. But the description of the girl seemed to him highly impressionistic. She was, he was convinced, both inane and vulgar. Inane, because she had accepted Harry, and vulgar because she could not help herself. The daughter of a cook, and also of a crook, how, he asked himself, could she be otherwise? None the less, ten million, and the father en route for the cemetery, after all, it did seem a pity.

"Yes," Harry repeated. "I'll chuck it."

He threw a glance out of the window, and wished he could follow it. He was profoundly unhappy, overwhelmed by one of those enormous griefs which, in the youth of life, the morrow disperses utterly.

Meditatively, Mr. Farquhar patted his mouth with a napkin, moved his plate aside, and considered his nephew.

"You will have to tell her," he at last remarked. "That will be a bit awkward."

Manfully, Harry exclaimed: "I'll write her."

Mr. Farquhar flicked a crumb from his sleeve.

"Suppose I take a hand. Suppose I go and break it gently. That would be better than writing—unless you used a pencil. Writing with a pencil is like talking in a whisper. Ink, don't you think, is so emphatic?"

"But," objected Harry, "I'd have to give you a line to her."

"There, there!" Mr. Farquhar soothingly replied. "Don't run into excesses. Besides, while I have received any number of letters of introduction, never yet have I presented one." With an uplift of the chin he resumed: "My name is sufficient."

As he spoke, he arose.

"You will go to her now?" Harry, rising also, heroically inquired.

"Yes."

Mr. Farquhar was as good as his word. Presently, in a hansom, he was sailing along toward the residence of this girl, who, on alighting, he learned was at home.

Telling the servant the sesame of that name of his, he looked about the room into which the servant then showed him. It was furnished with plenty of taste, and, to his surprise, none of it bad. But his surprise heightened when the girl herself appeared. Instead of the vulgar young person whom he had imagined, here, a hand extended to this uncle of her betrothed, was a superselect beauty speaking in a voice that was silken:

"I am so glad to see you. Harry has so often—— But won't you be seated?"

Mr. Farquhar heard, but did not heed. He was thinking how could he tell this loveliness that his nephew would not marry her, and would not, moreover, because of distasteful things of which she was innocent, and doubtless unaware. He simply could not. All the innate gentility in him rebelled. It was impossible. He would lie first. And at once, in an unhallowed inspiration, the lie hopped out:

"Harry is no more!"

The girl started.

"Dead?"

"Worse!"

At this questions and exclamation marks shot from the beauty's eyes.

"Yes," Mr. Farquhar resumed. "Not an hour ago the young scoundrel eloped with an old harridan, hang him!"

Bewilderment lifted the girl visibly, like a lash.

"What?"

"And hanging is too good for him; he ought to have his ghost kicked."

"But——"

"An old harridan! A hunchback dwarf! With a harelip at that!"

"But——"

"I know. When he could have had you! How, you wonder, can such a thing be. Believe me, in your wonderment I collaborate."

"But——"

"I know. I appreciate. Yet now, as you may see, it is but a case of good riddance to bad rubbish. I came to condole, I remain to congratulate."

The girl turned, crossed the room, recrossed it, sat down.

Mr. Farquhar eyed her, and, eying, divined the effort she was making to re-adjust herself. In looking at her he saw she was looking at the floor, and saw, too, that she looked infernally pretty. Beauty in distress is very appealing. Yet was she, Mr. Farquhar asked himself, really distressed? Concerning Harry, he had no illusions. He was a nice boy, but, otherwise, from the avuncular standpoint, an imbecile, whereas this girl was charming—so charming that he realized, as never before, what a confounded fool Harry was.

Through what miracle charm of any kind had been evolved in this young woman, whose antecedents were so clearly precarious, Harry's uncle, accustomed as he was to the multiple surprises of metropolitan life, no more thought of attempting to determine than he would have thought of dissecting a rose. Instead of anything so futile he moved to where she sat.

There, impelled by sudden sympathy,

by a sympathy which was new to him, he spoke:

"My dear child, you think you have lost something. Believe me, you have gained."

The girl, who had been looking down, looked up. Her eyes—diamonds on purple velvet—were tearless. In their deep depths grief had either sunk away or else been throttled.

"You are undoubtedly right," she answered, in that silken voice of hers. "Besides, it is at least consoling to know that—"

"That love returns to the heart as the leaf returns to the tree," Mr. Farquhar swiftly and sagaciously interjected.

But the feminine in her was not to be denied.

"It is at least consoling to know that the lady is—er—well—what you tell me."

Subtly, with tender calm, Mr. Farquhar retouched the picture: "A monster!"

The girl smiled.

"I wish them both joy." As she spoke she stood up. "Will you have some tea?"

Mr. Farquhar would, and did. He had tea with her that day, and on the next, and on the day after, and the day succeeding. He had tea with her so often that he found time to tell her certain things, and to learn certain others.

He told her that he was not as young as he might be—which perhaps was evident. He told her that in point of worldly goods, he classed himself among the newly poor—which, it may be, she suspected.

Then novelties were produced. He told her that he had loved her at first sight—which, he told her also is often second sight—and that phenomenon sufficiently explained, he told her that he was lonely, and learned that so was she; learned, too, and rather to his surprise, that this loneliness she attributed to her father.

"I did not know you knew," said Mr. Farquhar, who, at the moment, found but that.

The girl nodded.

"I have for years." She brushed a tear. "But how shall it matter? The doctors say he cannot live."

Nor did he. Afterward, after a decent interval, that is, Mr. Farquhar told her something else. He told the rhyme and reason of his lie.

"But!" the girl exclaimed.

Her hand had been in his, her head on his shoulder. At once she moved a little away. A perspective had suddenly unfolded. In it she saw a nephew's cowardice, an uncle's bravery. The one amused, the other appealed. But of these inward emotions she gave no outward sign. Instead, she murmured demurely:

"I thought that gentlemen never told—"

"Sometimes," Mr. Farquhar interrupted. "Sometimes they do."

Those eyes of hers she lowered, and it was as though addressing the carpet that she asked:

"To whom, then, do they?"

Mr. Farquhar caught up, and repeated, the question.

"To whom do gentlemen ever lie?" Drawing her to him, he continued: "To whom, indeed, except to those they love? Won't you forgive me?"

The question was needless. Already in the girl's now-lifted eyes laughter floated.

Harry was less indulgent. When he learned the truth he reviled his uncle and his aunt-to-be.

"Nephews are so intolerant," Mr. Farquhar, with his usual calm, commented. "You see, my dearest, truth is not suited to everybody, nor, for that matter, are lies."

At which his dearest smiled, and said:

"No, of course not; unless, like your own, they happen to be splendid."





III.—AND A CHILD SHALL LEAD THEM

Tall happened with the rapidity of conventional melodrama; even the Marquis reflected in that strain when, some hours later, he reviewed the incidents.

The Row was unusually crowded, and every horse appeared to be sensitive to the slightest distraction. Equine "nerves" are infectious—a pony, made restive by the aggravation of a chapped heel, can impart terror to the most stolid of cab horses.

The Marquis had risen early, and left the suburban boarding house an hour before the breakfast was served. He explained the action to the humble little maid-of-all-work in these words:

"I have an appointment with a millionaire cousin who breakfasts promptly at seven o'clock. Pray do not lay breakfast for me."

She, being wise as the result of long experience of "failures," sighed enviously, and surreptitiously placed a sandwich in his overcoat pocket. There is a special niche in heaven for Lizzie with the mouse-colored hair. Marcus Aurelius Lavender, otherwise the Marquis, breathed a prayer to that end when he came to eat the sandwich on a seat near the Row.

"One day," he said softly, "I shall close my eyes to the smuts, and kiss her cheek, and endeavor to convince her that I believe her story of the gentleman who loved her, and died before he could prove it."

It was the tramp sitting on the other end of the park seat who drew the Marquis' attention to the possibilities of a tragedy. A faint murmur of fear rose from the crowd. The riders in the Row tugged at their horses' heads, and moved to the side of the Row; one or two grooms slid from the saddle, and made some show of preparing to grapple with the runaway horse that was careering toward them, foam flying in flakes from its muzzle.

The rider, a lady in a green habit, her hair falling about her shoulders as the result of an impact between her hat and a low-lying branch at the side of the Row, had apparently given up hope of saving herself, as the bridle was hanging loosely from the frightened horse's neck, and she was clutching the bow of the saddle, her cheeks whiter than the flakes of foam which bespattered her skirt. If the maddened animal diverted a yard from the course it was keeping, collision with a tree was inevitable.

The tramp laughed softly.

"Serve her right!" he growled. "Serve 'em all right! Curse 'em! What do you say, matey?"

The Marquis replied by slipping beneath the rail that separated the sidewalk from the Row. The horse was still a hundred yards away. Methodically he removed his cumbersome overcoat, folding it neatly, and placing it with his hat near the side of the gallop. His massive head, surmounted by waves of fluffy yellow hair, seemed to settle

itself down into the broad shoulders, just as the head of a wrestler bows the moment before he comes to grips with the foe. A watching woman, hysterical, like the majority of her sex, screamed.

The runaway was less than ten yards from the Marquis. For a fraction of time his eyes met those of the rider—met them, and spoke to them. Then the agile body of the Marquis leaped upward, his left hand seized the hanging bridle; the weight of his body pulled the head of the horse down, but with access of spirit it prepared to rear. The Marquis was infinitely more familiar with horses than the classics—they used to tell him that in the college days when he was wont to break bounds and gallop over the countryside on a hack purloined from a farmer in the district.

As the horse struggled to free its head of that powerful left hand, the Marquis swung his right, and half hooked it, as he himself would have said, behind the ear. The blow had the full weight of the shoulder behind it, and the animal staggered, reared again feebly, received another blow—and realized, if the term is permissible, that here was some one with a stronger will than its own.

The lady in the green habit slid heavily from the saddle, and into the arms of the trembling male companion who had galloped up. She had strength enough to whisper a word on behalf of the Marquis before drifting into a swoon, and the man called to the rescuer in a voice that was almost a command.

"Come here!" he said. And, after fumbling in his pocket, drew out half a sovereign. He flicked the coin. The Marquis caught it neatly, and flicked it to the tramp, who had come up to the crowd.

Then, recovering his hat and coat, Marcus Aurelius Lavender pushed his way through the press, and walked briskly toward the park gates. His big eyes were gleaming with anger, his hands were clenched. And at the sound of running steps behind him he turned quickly, passionately.

"Say another word," he said, "and I'll smash you!"

The last two words trailed away. It was not the male companion of the lady, as he had supposed. A short, middle-aged man with a scarred face, which was wonderfully softened by two bright, kindly eyes, held out his hand, and spoke rapidly yet winningly.

"I saw it all," he said, familiarly slipping his right arm through the Marquis' left, "and I wish to thank you."

"And why?"

The little man with the scarred face smiled.

"Pooh! My dear fellow, I may look an oddity, but pray do not bark at me in that way."

The Marquis, his cheeks flushed, held out his hand.

"I beg your pardon," he said meekly, all trace of fire gone from his eyes. "I was annoyed by the action of that cad."

"Annoyed! You reminded me of a bear—a tame bear I once goaded into spitefulness. But that's another story. Now, I wonder if you're likely to claw me to death if I suggest that a good, hearty breakfast should be acceptable? There, there! I'm not offering you charity, but I know that you haven't breakfasted. I saw you hiding a sandwich just now."

"There is no crime in that."

"Certainly not; but it was indiscreet—you betrayed your condition to the observant. A man who is poor cannot afford to eat sandwiches in a public place; provided his clothes are comparatively free from dust stain, and his bearing dignified, he should walk into the best hotel he can find, complain of an enfeebled appetite, and order a sandwich, consuming it with little evidence of appreciation the while he waits for Lord Somebody, who ought to have arrived an hour before. Then, the sandwich consumed, he should pace the floor, inform the waiter that he cannot wait longer, pay his coppers, again with dignity, and leave. My dear fellow, life is just one long game of 'poker.' Just bluff from beginning to end."

"And supposing that he hadn't any coppers to pay with?"

"In that case, he should leave Lord

Somebody to settle the bill, walk out quickly, and trust to luck."

"Luck!" The Marquis smiled bitterly. "I don't know the meaning of the word."

"I do," said the little man briskly. "I have been looking for a *man* for years. And at last I found you. This is a car I paid for. Get in. We'll breakfast together at the Apollo."

The Marquis drew back a pace, but there was something extraordinarily compelling in the blue eyes that were fixed on his.

"My name," said the little man, "is Silas Unicker. I'm supposed to be the richest man that ever came out of the copper market in the States. Also—and the world does not suppose this—I am probably the most unhappy."

They drove to the Apollo, where the little man had a suite of rooms on the first floor. As he approached the entrance, a couple of attendants rushed forward to open the doors, the under-manager left the side of a gentleman in the vestibule to dart forward and bow a welcome. The way to the lift was lined by smiling and smirking menials.

"There!" Mr. Unicker exclaimed. "One phase of my unhappiness. I detest servility, because it is so difficult to distinguish it from hypocrisy. Ah! Here we are, Mr.—Mr.—"

"Lavender," said the Marquis shortly.

"A very sweet name," was the comment, "and very illuminating."

"How so?"

"Dear me!" The little man was urging the Marquis toward the breakfast table. "I always breakfast late," he put in parenthetically. "It gives me an opportunity of going out to study the faces of those who have no breakfast to eat. Lavender! A very sweet name. And the Christian—"

"Marcus Aurelius," was the ingenious reply.

"Ah! Now I understand the gleam of devilry that came into your eyes when my Lord Pennant offered to reward heroism with base coin. Men, somehow, live up to their names."

"Lord Pennant?" the Marquis queried.

"The same. The lady is his sister."

"You know them?"

"I'm supposed to know everything, but I don't. A charming woman, sir."

"I saw her face only for a second," said the Marquis. "It was very beautiful to look upon."

"Her soul is even more beautiful." Mr. Unicker sighed. "Hers is a face that would inspire most men. It inspired me when first I gazed upon it, but—but my name lacks the romance of—say, Marcus Aurelius. Tut! Keep your seat and temper! Fancy a Greek god of the name of Silas. Now"—he gently rubbed his palms—"tell me, and don't prevaricate, what was the cause of your fall?"

The Marquis turned slowly in his seat. There was no resentment in the look he flashed at the little man; indeed, a sense of humor was beginning to kill the savage that was dormant in him.

"Fall!" he echoed. "From what?"

"From gentleman to—er—well, to man!"

And the Marquis, smiling because of a triumph which he believed a few months of adversity had brought him, inquired:

"Would you call that a fall, Mr. Unicker?"

The little man clapped his hands with delight.

"Any ambitions?" he asked.

"Unable to define them," was the reply.

"Ah! But you will have some day. No man can escape them." Mr. Unicker was tapping his plate with a knife. "Wait till you're my age, forty, and you won't speak so lightly of one of the natural punishments of man. Look older, eh? That's part of the punishment. And wait till you fall in love! Have you ever loved any one? No, don't answer that. I can see your mother in your eyes. Now! What—am—I—to—do—for—you?"

The Marquis pushed his chair back from the table.

"Perhaps," he said curtly, "you will wait till I ask—"

Mr. Unicker held up a finger to compel silence. The tape machine in the corner of the room was ticking out a message. He crossed the floor, and skimmed the ribbon through his fingers as only a financier knows how. When he came back to the table his eyes were beaming.

"Market open only one hour, and I've made forty thousand on Andalusians."

The Marquis sipped his coffee.

"Forty thousand by a stroke of the pen!" Mr. Unicker spoke with pride.

Still no comment.

"Forty thousand!" he repeated.

"Doesn't that interest you, young man?"

"Why should it?" the Marquis asked.

The little man screwed his lips up in a whistle.

"Good!" he exclaimed.

"How much happiness are you likely to buy with that forty thousand?"

The Marquis had accepted Mr. Unicker's hospitality, but it was characteristic of him that he did not intend to repay it with unctuousness.

Mr. Unicker's face fell, and his fingers stroked the point of his scarred chin.

"I never calculate like that," he said slowly, "although I used to think in that strain before Seth died."

"Seth?"

"My last partner in Oregon. We used to reckon up the happiness that was to come to us by the half-yearly profits, and just when we were thinking of leaving work behind, and going back to civilized parts to enjoy the luck that had come our way, the explosion occurred. I went back to find Seth"—he passed his hand across his eyes—"and when I tried to get him on my back, he grinned—grinned with one arm somewhere in the cutting, and his ribs crushed. 'Mighty lot of fun I've got out of it, Silas,' he said; 'get back and make the best of yours.' And then came the second explosion, and—and when they got me out I was a changed man in thought. No, sir, you can't buy happiness. You may think that you're buying it, but it's my experience that when you come to untie the parcel you

find that you've got away with a lump of bitterness."

The Marquis' eyes blinked as they rested on the scarred face.

"Perhaps," he said gently, "you have never tried to find happiness."

"Oh, yes, I have," Mr. Unicker said, with alacrity. "And what's more, I found it! Found it—and lost it—let it slip through my fingers just like that"—he clutched at an imaginary vision—"and here I am, a man of forty, with money enough to finance a war if I wished it, and happiness still somewhere on the horizon. But we're drifting again. What about you? I've taken a fancy to you—like your face and temper. I saw you a few minutes before you jumped at the head of the hack this morning. I should like you to have a fair chance. What can you do?"

"Nothing, with any degree of success."

"Good! If you'd said 'anything,' I should have called myself a fool for taking an interest in you. Do you know anything about the stock market?"

"Absolutely nothing."

"Good again! I once won fifty dollars, away back there, on a bet that a varsity man who had drifted into the camp couldn't spell 'animal.' He couldn't; but he nearly knocked a hole in me for correcting his mistake. One minute!"

A waiter had brought in a telegram, which Mr. Unicker tore open with frantic haste. As he read, his eyes lighted up.

"No answer," he almost shouted at the waiter.

"Happiness?" the Marquis inquired.

"Happiness!" he echoed. "My boy, if you only understood one-half the significance of this message, you would—you would— Tell me, have you ever heard of Grayden Hobbes, the financier?"

"The name is familiar."

"Worth half the money there is in the country, I should say."

"Well?"

"Well, if he could get a glimpse of that message he would be prepared to

pay anything up to twenty thousand for it. He knows me—and fears me. I've taught him something since I came into the game. Look at the message. What does it say? Just 'Buy Redds at once. Time ripe.' That means that I can go into the market to-morrow, buy 'Redds' at rock-bottom price, and make a fortune out of them by three in the afternoon. Where's that code book of mine?"

He searched about the room, then begged the Marquis to excuse him a few minutes while he went down to the hotel office.

He had been out of the room only three minutes, when a waiter came to the Marquis with a newspaper, and a request from Mr. Unicker that he would remain for half an hour, as he had been called to his City office.

The Marquis nodded assent, and fell to perusing the columns of print. Of a sudden, he allowed the newspaper to fall from his fingers. He straightened himself, paced the floor, clenched his hands—and the old fire of resentment crept into his big eyes. He stopped near the telephone, smiled a trifle bitterly, turned over the pages of the directory, then picked up the receiver.

"City, double nought," he said, in a voice that trembled despite the apparent calm of his features. "Is that Grayden Hobbes' office? Good! I'm a chance acquaintance of Mr. Silas Unicker. Know him? He's what? Known to every fool? He may be, but if he should call at your office—he's on his way to the City now—you can tell him that he may be able to read the stock market from beginning to end, but he's a hopeless failure when it comes to reading men."

He threw the receiver on the rest, and picked up his overcoat. His eyes were blazing now, and the set of his jaws suggested tooth on tooth. He strode toward the door, but even as he stretched out a hand to open it, Mr. Silas Unicker entered. The scarred face was twitching pathetically, and actually there were tears in the eyes.

"I crave your pardon," he said humbly. "You are a man."

The Marquis drew himself up stiffly, and refused the proffered handshake.

"I may be down," he said bitterly, "but I am still honest."

"I was only testing you," the little man pleaded. "I have been disappointed so often that I dared not take any risk."

"And, having carefully laid a trap, you went into the next room, had your line disconnected, and waited for me to nibble the bait."

"You are quick to comprehend," the little man murmured.

"The insult was so studied."

Mr. Unicker walked to the window.

"You'll be clearing out now, I suppose?"

"What else could you expect?"

A long silence. Then:

"Don't! You and I were getting on famously, and I hoped that you would be able to fit yourself into my life."

The Marquis had opened the door.

"Good morning," he said curtly.

"Stay!" Mr. Unicker drew him back into the room, and touched the bell. "There's a little chap in the room above," he said, so quietly that his voice was almost inaudible, "his life is not all sunshine, because I have never been able to understand his mind. He needs a tutor—some one who will take an interest in him, and try to make up all that he's lost. He's a wonderfully intelligent boy, but there's something in his nature that an ordinary person cannot understand."

"I'm sorry," the Marquis began, again moving toward the door.

A waiter entered, in answer to the bell.

"Bring Master Seth down," said Mr. Unicker.

The Marquis, moved by the strained expression in the face of the little financier, resumed his seat, and waited. In a few moments, the waiter returned, bringing with him a boy of five or six years of age. Mr. Unicker stepped forward, and took hold of the boy's hand.

"I wish to introduce a gentleman to you, Seth," he said, and the boy, without raising his eyes or glancing at the Marquis, said: "Yes, sir."

"And I'm trying to get him to stay with us, just to keep you company."

"I have my own friends," said the boy, with dignity.

"Ah, yes," said Mr. Unicker. Then, in a whisper to the Marquis: "He means his dream friends."

The Marquis held out his hand to the boy, and was pained by the ignorance of it.

"I should like to be friends," he said, and there was a note of genuine pleading in his voice. "You see, I haven't a friend in the world that I know of, and——"

"I don't see," said the boy, with dramatic slowness.

The Marquis stooped, looked into the boy's face, and drew a deep breath. Mr. Unicker nodded, and turned away his head. The boy was blind!

"I think we should be good pals, Seth," said the Marquis, in the tone of one boy speaking to another. "I know a lot of your friends."

"My friends!"

The boy came nearer, and allowed himself to be lifted on the Marquis' knee.

"Yes—your friends—the soldiers who ride across the sky in the dead of night, and the fairies who come down from the clouds on the backs of rain-drops." It was the mother of Marcus Aurelius Lavender who was speaking, for what could this great-limbed, careless, ambitionless fellow know of fairies and skyriders? "And I can sing to you the songs that the hailstones sing when they play a tattoo on the window."

The child's right hand was traveling over the Marquis' face, seeking an impression to carry to the mind.

"Is it always night to you, also?" he asked, with tender solicitude.

All the worldliness that had gathered about his mind since the day he left his mother's knee was forgotten by the Marquis in that sacred moment.

"It is never night," he said gently, "if you care to shut your eyes and imagine it is the day."

The child was silent for a moment. Then:

"I should like you to stay with me," he whispered.

"As long as you wish it," was the promise.

The boy was taken back to his room, where the nurse awaited him. The Marquis glanced at Mr. Unicker, a question in his eyes.

"I'll tell you the story," said the little man; "it is quite short. That child's father tried to buy happiness, and failed. I knew him well, and have tried to model my life with his faults as a guide. He had the faculty of making money merely by glancing at a mountainside. If he said there was copper in the middle of a lake, it was worth another man's while to try to reach it. He was making money so easily that he forgot to be human. He married a woman who was far above his station, but who made no capital out of the fact. She loved him, but he neglected her. He didn't care how she filled in her time, so long as she didn't interfere with his business of piling up a gigantic fortune. She left him, and went back to her people, but that didn't cure him.

"He made up his mind to humble her in the eyes of the world—just to convince her that his money was a stronger weapon than any that she could wield. He was so bitter that he called upon every force that was likely to aid him, and the law, believing his emissaries, made him a free man, and gave him the custody of their twelve months' old child.

"He tried to find in his child the happiness he thought the woman had stolen from him. He spent a fortune in preparing for the time when the child would be able to appreciate his devotedness. Nothing was too good for it. Why, on his estate he had an army of workmen engaged in building all kinds of miniature structures. Toy soldiers! He had a thousand life-sized effigies spread over the estate—horses of every color, soldiers of every regiment, all guaranteed to move by the finest of mechanism. The nursery represented more money than he had earned in any one year. There was in it everything

that a child could desire. He did all this not because he was devoted to the child, but because he wished the child to forget the mother. The child was two years of age when the blindness came."

"And the father?" the Marquis queried.

"That man died," said Mr. Unicker solemnly, "but not before he had tried to win the woman back. But he had killed her love. It was too late."

The tape machine in the corner of the room commenced again to tick its message from the stock exchange, and the noise came as a relief to both men.

"Let's be businesslike," said Mr. Unicker. "The boy appears to like you. If you care to stay and look after him, helping me along in my business in between whiles, you can name your own figure."

And thus it was that Marcus Aurelius Lavender, failure in a hundred ways, fell on his feet, at least for a while. The boy, Seth, took an inordinate fancy to him, never suffering him to be out of his presence for any great length of time. They went out together, hand in hand, for all the world like brothers, and the Marquis talked to him as he would have talked to one of his own age.

Once, as they sat in the park, the Marquis describing "dream pictures" to the boy, the lady in the green riding habit galloped down the Row. She immediately checked her horse, bowed to the Marquis, and whispered hurriedly to the man riding by her side.

"Come," said the Marquis to the boy, "we'll get out of the crowd."

And, picking the child up in his arms, he climbed a fence and struck out across the park, where the horseman could not follow him.

"I might kill him," the Marquis muttered, "if he tried to repeat his insult—before her."

Twice during the walk back to the hotel, the Marquis was conscious of being followed, but for what reason he could not imagine. Mr. Unicker enlightened him somewhat on his return.

"It may sound ludicrous," he said,

"that in this stage of civilization, a man in my position courts as many risks as your ancestors did in the days when might was right. One of the penalties of holding great wealth is the continual shadowing to which you're subjected. Men who have given up their lives to the amassing of wealth let nothing stand in their way if there's a chance of making more. No doubt your position in my service is well known to the moneyed crowd. If it were possible to get anything out of you, they would think it worth their while to keep you under observation. A private secretary of mine carried a dispatch for me from the south coast to the north. He was given to talking, I think; otherwise, he would have got through. When they took him out of the railway carriage at his journey's end he was still under the influence of chloroform, and the dispatch was gone. It cost me, roughly, fifty thousand, but it would have cost me more than that if I had made a noise about it."

A week later, Mr. Unicker returned from his City office in a state of great perturbation. At a sign from him, the boy was taken to his own room.

"Close the door, Lavender," said the little man. "Now, sit here, and look out of the window, while I talk. When last did you see the lady you assisted in the Row—the lady in green?"

The Marquis started visibly.

"Almost every day she is to be seen there," he replied, in a mystified voice. "Why do you ask?"

The little man was stroking his chin thoughtfully.

"She inspired you, didn't she, Lavender?"

"I had almost forgotten the incident," said the Marquis.

"So!" Mr. Unicker shook his head reproachfully. "Would you go to her assistance again if you thought she was in trouble?"

"I trust that I would do as much for any lady in distress," said the Marquis, a faint blush tinging his cheeks.

The little man sighed.

"What a Roman you would have

made, Lavender!" he murmured. "You're all fight, and chivalry—and honesty!" He paused to scrutinize the young man's face. "Would you like to render that lady another service?" he asked, gnawing at his nether lip as he awaited reply. "The lady is in trouble, and I think I know the key to her happiness. Lord Pennant is her brother—he is interested in several companies which I control—he is her favorite brother—if anything happened to him it would probably break her heart."

"Is anything likely to happen to him?"

"I don't know," said Mr. Unicker enigmatically. "Strange things happen in the world of finance. Would you like to run down to Pennant's place, near Windsor? It may strike you as being a simple suggestion to make, but it isn't. If they knew what the letter contained—the letter you must take with you—half the City would be after you like hounds on the trail of a fox. I could afford to charter a special train for you, or requisition a battalion of soldiers to act as an escort, but that would be advertising the importance of your mission. You're smiling, but I assure you that I'm quite serious. It is now four o'clock. I will write the letter, and you can get ready for the journey. You'll take Seth with you—the change will do the little chap good, and his presence will divert suspicion from yourself."

He left the room, leaving the Marquis in a state of bewilderment, and yet not wholly without pleasurable anticipation. If he wasn't living in the Middle Ages, he was groping about in a world of which he had never dreamed.

Mr. Unicker was obviously agitated when he returned to the room. The boy, Seth, was at his side.

"Ready, Lavender? Good! Here's the letter. Now, look me in the eyes, and don't stand on that dignity of yours. I'm putting greater trust in you than I have done in any other man of my acquaintance. This letter must be delivered to Lord Pennant's sister, and you, yourself, must place it in her hands. Stay! We'll pin it in the pocket of Seth's overcoat. If there's any chlo-

roforming to be done they won't think of Seth."

The letter was placed in the boy's pocket with so much ceremonial that the Marquis had difficulty in suppressing a smile. They were to catch the five-o'clock train from town, and return the same night. They had reached the corridor, and were walking toward the lift, when the voice of Mr. Unicker called to them from the door of the room. Some sweetmeat for Seth. The boy walked back to the room, and Unicker drew him inside. The Marquis waited a moment, then went back to the door. The little man was kissing the child with a passion the Marquis had never suspected!

The perils of the Middle Ages! It was not so bad as all that, but the journey to Windsor was made so memorable that the Marquis vowed he would never forget it. The distance from the hotel to the station was no more than a mile across the city, and the commissionaire at the hotel door hailed a motor cab for him. A driver, wearing goggles, almost fought with another for the "fare," and chuckled softly as the Marquis and the boy stepped into his vehicle. Only a mile to the station, and yet the driver seemed to be running all round the world to reach it.

At the end of twenty minutes, the Marquis began to realize the seriousness of Mr. Unicker's warning. He seized the speaking tube, and called on the man to stop. The fellow took no notice, merely accelerated his speed.

"Stop at a tobacconist's shop," he shouted. "I want a cigar."

The quickness with which the man obeyed increased the Marquis's suspicion. He made a pretense of leaving the boy alone in the car while he went into the shop, but when a yard from the edge of the pavement he wheeled on his heel just as the driver was about to kick the switch along preparatory to restarting the car.

The Marquis was on him in a flash, and the next thing the man remembered was waking up on the pavement with a silver coin in his hand. The Marquis and the boy had chartered another cab.

A runner at the station offered the boy a flower, and was elbowed out of the way in a brutal manner. As the Marquis was taking his tickets at the booking office, a smartly dressed person in the livery of the Apollo Hotel rushed up breathlessly with the story that Mr. Unicker wished the boy to be sent back to the hotel at once, Mr. Lavender to continue his journey.

The Marquis hesitated only a second. Then he looked the man squarely in the eyes.

"I'll give you a minute to get outside the station," he said; "if you don't take advantage of that minute I'll break every bone in your body."

The man slid away among the crowd. The Marquis smiled. He was taking no risks.

He and the boy entered a first-class apartment, and the fact that they were the only occupants seemed to suggest that the troubles were at an end. Just as the train was about to move, however, an elderly lady was bundled into the compartment, and dropped, in a fainting condition, on the seat opposite. It was a very mild afternoon, and the Marquis gallantly lowered the windows, and offered the lady a newspaper that she might use it as a fan. The boy whispered that he, too, was uncomfortably warm, whereupon the Marquis removed the child's overcoat, taking care to place it on the seat near him.

The train was scheduled to stop at only one station before reaching Windsor—a station less than two miles from the Marquis' destination. The elderly lady had entered into a pleasant conversation with the boy soon after leaving town, and they were still chatting away when the train slowed down. The Marquis opened the carriage door in order to admit more air, and to step down to the platform, that he might stretch his legs. His back was turned no longer than three seconds, but in that time the elderly lady and the boy disappeared—dropped quietly out of the other door.

It would be futile to attempt a description of the Marquis' consternation. He leaped on the rails, regardless of the

danger, called upon the station officials to assist him in the search, cursed them for their dilatoriness, and was rewarded only by the recovery of the child's overcoat, which had been dropped in the six-foot way as the woman hurried across the metals. The letter was still in the pocket.

As the train passed out of sight, leaving the Marquis standing on the platform in a dazed, distrait condition, he heard the throbbing of a motor car's engine in the road outside the station. He was through the subway in a fraction under a minute, and was just in time to see the elderly woman's hat as the car swerved round the bend in the road.

The Marquis reached Windsor in a state bordering on insanity. Lord Pennant's house was half a mile out of the town, and he decided first to deliver the letter, and then to resume his pursuit of the fugitive woman. Already he had advised the police of the occurrence, but his story was told in so incoherent a manner, and, on the face of it, sounded so improbable, that they accepted it with a smile of incredulity.

The powdered manservant who opened the hall door drew back in alarm as the Marquis, his hair disheveled, pushed his way in.

"Lord Pennant's sister, and quickly!" he commanded.

The man stepped toward a bell, apparently with the intention of summoning assistance, but he was jerked round until he fairly spun on his heels.

"Every minute is valuable to me," the Marquis snarled, "and if you don't take my message at once, I'll—"

He checked himself there. Some one was coming down the broad stairway, and inquiring gently the name of the visitor who wished to see her. It was the lady of the Row.

The Marquis stammered an apology for his appearance, but she held out her hand, and drew him toward a reception room.

"At last," she said softly, "I have the opportunity of thanking my rescuer."

"Madam"—the Marquis bowed be-

fore her—"it is not for that that I have come here to-night. I am bearer of a letter from Mr. Unicker, whose name, I believe, is familiar to Lord Pennant. I was instructed to deliver it into your hands, and, having performed that office, I beg of you to excuse me. Something terrible has happened since I left town an hour ago."

She smiled, and motioned him to a chair.

"You have lost the boy who was accompanying you," she said; and, before he could recover himself, went on: "You need have no fear for his safety, and I assure you that your solicitude only adds to my obligations. The boy is here."

"Here?" The Marquis was swaying as though suddenly enfeebled.

She opened the letter and glanced at the writing. There were tears in her eyes as she looked up, and said:

"Mr. Unicker is fond of the boy?"

"Mr. Unicker," said the Marquis slowly, and in a burst of confidence which might not have commended itself to the little man at the Apollo, "is a very lonely man, despite his great wealth. The boy must, of necessity, mean a great deal to him."

She nodded, and glanced again at the letter.

"And I am a very lonely woman," she said, in a low voice. "That is why I was ready to defy the law, and take the child at any cost. Had this letter not come, we should have left the country to-morrow. You are still mystified?"

"I am trying hard to understand," said the Marquis.

"The boy is my son," she whispered, and her eyes were moist with tears.

"Your son!" he exclaimed. "Then

why should Mr. Unicker detain him against your wishes?"

"Because the law made him the child's guardian. For over three years I have been trying to circumvent the law, but the child has been guarded too jealously."

Slowly the light began to dawn on the mind of the Marquis.

"Do you mean that Mr. Unicker is your husband?" he inquired, in a breath.

"He *was*," she answered, and handed him the letter which he had brought. It was quite short, but it epitomized the tragedy of two lives:

We have been blind too long, Sybil. Let the boy open our eyes.

"He knew that you were intent on obtaining possession of the child?" said the Marquis.

"Yes," she answered; "and this means that I have regained even more."

"Thank God for that!" said a quiet voice from the door.

Mr. Silas Unicker was standing there. She uttered a faint cry that was neither fear nor surprise, then covered her face with her hands.

Mr. Unicker glanced at the Marquis. "My car is waiting at the door," he said quietly. "I'll join you in a moment."

"But you told me," the Marquis protested, as the car raced along the road, "that the man who robbed the mother of the boy was dead."

"He is dead," said Mr. Unicker emphatically, "and a new man was built on his faults. Lavender, this may strike you as being a little melodramatic, but, believe me, life is just one long melodrama. First the tears—and then the joy. Oh, yes, the joy, Lavender! And you're going to share it. You are!"

THE STRONGER ONE

SAID Hate to Love: "None can resist
My strength!" Love kissed his cheek.

And lo! Hate vanished like the mist

When morning gilds the peak.

WILLIAM WALLACE WHITELOCK.

NEVER A WELSHER

By

Margaret Burrous Martin

YOU are making awfully hard work of it, my friend."

The man turned from the window where he stood looking out on "the quiet zone," and met the calm brown eyes of the nurse with mixed surprise and resentment in his own.

"You mean," he finally questioned, "of dying?"

"Just that," she answered, smoothing a pillow which a few minutes before he had crushed in a frenzy of fear and rebellion. "Of course you know that the doctor has told me what their verdict is?"

He searched her face with pathetic eagerness.

"Do you think there is any chance that he—that they—are wrong?" he flung at her. "Do you think I have a chance—any chance?"

She studied his face with impersonal appraisement.

"Does it mean so much to you—life?" she parried. "Are you so happy, so busy?"

"Happy? Dear, no! 'Busy?' Who isn't, to the limit, these days? But, don't you see," he argued, his thin arms flung wide, "I am young, *young*—and to die, *die*! Is there anything harder?"

"Harder?" Oh, yes," answered the nurse. "Did you see a carriage drive up below there at the wing a little while ago? The woman who came in that carriage is young, younger than you—or I—by several years. This is

the fourth time she has been here in seven years. The fourth, and each time she has been through harder than any death I have ever seen. I have known hundreds, you know. Ah, yes—birth is much harder than death. Do you know what she said, that little woman, when I met her a few minutes ago? 'I am so glad to come just now, because I can be home with all the babies for Christmas.' Just that, at the door again of harder, far harder, than death."

The man, leaning against the window, opened and shut moist fingers restlessly while the nurse spoke of the young mother. It all seemed so far away from him, a young man, condemned, so the specialists told him, to death. Birth! Why, nearly every woman went through that; there was nothing unusual about that. Death, now—but every woman went through that, too; every woman—this cold, mechanical woman here, this nurse, who talked of hundreds of deaths. She would have to die some time.

The man, unmanned by long hours of introspection, and keenest, most exquisite torture of anticipation; unnerved by drugs that failed to bring him frantically desired sleep, hugged the thought of this woman's death to his tortured heart with glee. Yes, this woman, the nurse who mocked his terror, she would have to die some time—not, perhaps, until she was old and helpless. How soon would *he* be helpless? Some time, though, she would have to die.

"You won't think it so easy when

your time comes," he said, with quite transparent malice.

The nurse ran professionally busy fingers over the perfectly smooth bed. A shadow whose depth gave selfish pleasure to the man passed over her calm face.

"Why, she isn't so young, after all!" he thought. "She must be my age nearly—thirty, anyhow."

"Would you rather be alone now?" she asked, after a little, apparently ignoring the barb of his last words.

"Oh, please, no! Anything but that. Talk to me, talk about anything, even talk of dying if you like. Anything so you stay. It's hell to think and think and think alone! And, say, I—was a beast to say what I did; but I guess you don't care—you're *well*. Dying is different when it's right after you."

"Yes," answered the nurse, adjusting a chair for the man, and seating herself away from the clear light of the window. Again a shadow, as of pity, passed over her serene face, and then she smiled a radiant smile.

"You are very much a boy," she said, the maternal instinct that is every good woman's sixth sense mellowing even as it lightened her voice.

"Boy!" he protested. "I'm thirty-four—will be thirty-five. No, before then—oh, Lord, I'm not a boy; I'm a baby!" Scalding tears filled the sleep-denied eyes. He dashed them away with the half-sobbed reiteration: "I'm a baby—a baby!"

"Oh, no," soothed the nurse; "not that. It's just so new to you, the thought. You are chafing at the bridle. I used to think when I was a little girl down in Kentucky that the colts there never appreciated their freedom in the blue pastures until they felt their first bit. It was hard for them; but after—after—oh, how they enjoyed the races to the finish."

"Did you like horse racing?" he asked eagerly, following her lead from the thoughts that frenzied him.

"Yes—oh, yes!" she assented. "I loved the track."

"Did you—you," he asked curiously, studying the arched brows, the long-

fingered, sensitive hands, "bet on horse racing?"

"No, no," she protested, with a laugh at his childish snatching at alien thoughts. "The women of our family could not do that, you know. But," she hastened to intercept the apology in his face, "I—I used to hold the stakes. We had a snake fence around the place, and early in the morning I would slip out with my brothers when they tried out their pet flesh. I would perch up in the corner of the rail fence, and Bud and Chan, my brothers, would put their bets in my lap.

"Once," and now the great brown eyes seemed to have forgotten the man watching her, "once my own filly ran against Chan's, and Bud was betting on her, and she lost, and I—I forgot the stakes. Bud had put up his seal ring against Chan's fob. I jumped down from the fence, and ran off to the woods to cry, and—we never found Bud's ring. Chan was awfully mad, and called me 'a little welsher.' We had a most unhappy time, and we called Uncle Gregg in to settle things. He explained to me what a welsher is. He told me while he held me on his lap, on the steps at the big stables, that ladies ought to let gentlemen's sports alone, and that the boys were wrong to mix me up with their betting; but he also said: 'Once in, and trusted with the stakes, little lady, you ought to have been game, especially as 'twas your filly that lost. No one of our family could be a welsher, of course, and we must be game—dead-game sports.'

"It made a deep impression on me, and I promised most earnestly and weepily that I would be a gentleman, even if I was only a girl, and never, never be a welsher, but stick by the game and hold the stakes hard if I was ever trusted with them again. It's not always easy not to be a welsher.

"But tell me," she shifted, "about yourself—your boyhood. You are carded as of 'sedentary occupation.' That, beyond your age, is the only thing I know."

"Sedentary occupation," he echoed. "Yes, I was; but do you know where I

ought to be now, right now, instead of here? Up in British Columbia in our timber tracts. Something is rotten up there, and I'm the one man in the office that could have any show of getting at it, and here I am here, here, waiting! Well!" He leaned back again in the white-covered chair. "If the timber holdings are wiped out, she—my wife, you know—will have the insurance and the houses, anyhow—that and her freedom. That's all she wants—*her freedom!*" he finished bitterly.

"Your wife!" The nurse hesitated. "I did not suppose—I—I have not seen her here, I mean. Tell me about the timber."

"Yes, I will, about the timber; but I'm going to play the baby farther, and tell you about her—my wife—first. Say, do you know, I believe I am beginning to understand about the people that believe in confession. It's been awful since I suspected, and then knew—not having any one to tell it all to. Some one that was not interested personally. You know, of course, you're *different*. I guess nurses all are sort of like confessors. A fellow can let loose, and feel better for it, and yet know that a nurse is different, and never cares."

The nurse who was "*different*" smiled an inscrutable smile. What a boy he was!

"Go on," she said.

"Well, about my wife now. At first we were all right; happier than most, I guess." Unconsciously the man's voice softened as he spoke of that happy time of the past. "Ten years ago it was that we were married; I didn't have much then, but it seemed the more I made the less happy she was. Never contented; we tried everything—or she did. I wasn't home much; hadn't the time, you see; business was growing, and I had to be at it all the time, and we weren't together much.

"This fall it was worse. I guess I was pretty cranky at times; maybe it was partly on account of this. I didn't know, of course; thought I was just tired; but things everywhere got worse and worse. Business, especially this

leak in the holdings themselves, everything kept me on edge. At home there was never any peace. One night she said she wasn't quite as well as usual—just some notion; she hadn't enough to do with the servants and all to keep her from thinking about every little ache. She looked fine—never better in her life. She wanted me to cut business the next day, and go on some fool jaunt down to see the old granny doctor she had as a little girl.

"Now, you know there are better doctors on every corner here. I told her I couldn't get away; expected a timber looker from the woods in any day; told her to go to a doctor that *was* a doctor here—to go to forty if she liked; it would keep her busy, and give me some peace until I got things straightened out. But she wouldn't give up the idea of going back down home and my going with her. We had a scene over it. She was always high-strung; not calm and cool like you."

The nurse kept her eyes on the man's fingers, lacing and interlacing over the chair arm, while he continued:

"She said she would *die* before she ever told me again that she was sick; that all I cared for in God's almighty earth was money, money, money; said she would rather starve than live another ten years like the last. I guess I sent back as hard as she gave. Anyhow, the next day she went to the old doctor, alone, and when he told her she was all right, I guess she was kind of sorry. She acted different, somehow, when she came back; but the looker had brought a rotten report, and I was suffering, you know, and I said things about her doing nothing and thinking too much about herself, and one thing and another, and we had the worst quarrel yet. She didn't say much. I guess there wasn't much to say; I'd said most everything. She knew how I'd slaved to get everything. Well, one day she went away back home to her mother."

For a moment there was silence in the room, and then the man began again in a more impersonal voice:

"I've been intending to go up in Canada and straighten out the business, and

give her my share, and then clear out and try and forget. Now this has come, and I can't do anything. She will have enough, of course; the insurance and the houses; but the rest of the company—there won't be any more than enough to pull out *honest*, with every cent swallowed up, if some one don't get up there quick that knows the inside of things; and I am the only one that could. I was all through there years ago; she—my wife—was with me. Do you know"—the bright, sleepless eyes seemed to burn into the nurse's face as the man leaned toward her—"we were happier up there among those rough camps than we have ever been any place. Funny, ain't it? It's great country up there. If only some one who knew could go and look into things, and here I am with——"

"Why don't you go?" asked the nurse simply.

The man glared at her, and then sank back in his chair. Twice he opened dry lips to speak, and then finally:

"I'm *dying*! Curse you, you know it, and if I'm to live six months I must keep quiet here, here—they all say that!"

"Yes, I know," said the nurse; "but you will be capable of traveling, of working, for two months, perhaps more. You could go up there, keep busy, forget yourself. You would not get your six months, but don't you see, man, you would be living, sticking to the game to the very last, not *dying* for six months, but doing, *living* until the end!"

The thin hands clenched on the arms of the chair. The pale cheeks grew paler, and then slowly burned crimson.

"You," the man snarled, like a hound wounded by its master, "you bloodless thing, get out of here—quick!"

The nurse, with the beautiful dignity of her sacrificial profession, rose calmly, and, with a tolerant, pitying smile, neared the door, and then turned.

"Poor boy!" she said softly. "You are making such hard work of it!"

Before the man, quivering with rage, could find words to fling at her, she was gone.

He sat motionless, glaring at the pol-

ished door that closed behind her. Gradually his mood changed. Another nurse stopped a moment at his door, and then passed on. The junior doctor called in a cheery greeting, but the man made no response. In fact, he scarcely heard nurse or doctor. For the first time in days, his mind was in the grasp of something else than his death warrant.

The nurse's brown eyes seemed to retrace with him the unsatisfactory last years of his home life. He thought of his wife, not as she was now, but in the long ago, in the flush of their early love. How soft and brown her eyes were when she was a girl, back there, and that little curl behind her ear, which he used——

The sick man groaned aloud as he thought of the past and the future. How many years had it been since he slipped his little finger into that curl? Why, not since those days up in the woods! "In the woods." What was it about the woods? Oh, yes, that woman, that nurse, wanted him to go up in the woods now to fix things. Wanted him to cut his last six months in two. Wanted him to die in a few weeks. Go up there and fix things, and then die—die like the horses that fell exhausted on the streets and were whipped to their feet to carry their loads a little farther.

Horses—what was it about horses? She, that crazy nurse, had said something about horses—Kentucky horses. Never cared much about horses himself, nor for racing. Guess he wasn't cut out for a sport. A sport! "A dead-game sport." Somebody's uncle—yes, that crazy nurse's uncle—had said her brothers must be dead-game sports, and none of them could be welshers. Welshers! The sneaks that ran off with the stakes when the game—what game? *Any* game—yes, any game!

Slowly the man's mind cleared, and as other things, other people passed through his mind, the Thing, the Terror, his own death warrant, took its true proportion. Gradually a new terror grasped his consciousness. Why, he—David Wilcox—the last of a long,

good line, was by way of being that contemptible thing, a welsher. Why, that was worse than dying! Everybody had to die.

The man who had shivered in piteous, sickening terror for days straightened his attenuated frame. He had wasted enough time. He must get busy and think this thing out. First he wanted something to eat.

He hurried across the room, and jerked the bulb by the bed for its cord—the bulb, the slightest grasp of which lighted the call light in the ward nurses' room. When a nurse—the man was relieved to see it was not *the* nurse—came, he greeted her with something of his old courtesy and decision. He wanted dinner. Yes. And could he have a good dinner, please? Not broths and baby foods and toast. Well, then, would she kindly get an order from the house surgeon for coffee and a steak—a thick, rare steak? Yes, please, and quickly.

He turned his chair from the window, and turned on the light over the little table, from whose drawer he pulled paper and pencil. He must ask that nurse to have his fountain pen filled, and he wished he had a stenographer. A man could not afford to waste time when he had but two or maybe three—he hoped it was three—months to work.

After dinner, with its coffee and quite thick, quite red steak, the man worked steadily for several hours; and then he summoned a nurse again.

"Send me that other nurse—you know, the one I usually have—the one with brown eyes. Tell her it's very important," he urged the nurse at his door.

Patients, especially patients who had Room 107, were entitled to vagaries. Patients from rooms in the 100 corridor were known to pay much of the margin of expenses left unpaid by patients in other corridors, where perhaps fewer vagaries were expected or tolerated.

When the nurse entered the room, even she was surprised at the change in Patient 107. David Wilcox rose to meet her with a physical grace that only to the eyes of old acquaintances would have been discounted.

"Miss—nurse," he exclaimed, with a depth to his voice she had not suspected, "I owe you most abject apologies; but, you understand, I have not time for all that. I can only trust I did not make you—uncomfortable. We both know what kind of a fool and a baby I have been, but we haven't time to worry about that. You threw down a challenge to me this afternoon, and, of course, I have taken it up."

The man, eager to get his explanations over, did not notice the little catch in the nurse's breath as he continued:

"I start for the woods Monday. This is Thursday. You must stand by me in my decision, keep them here from bothering me with protests. Then you must write out for me in detail all the rot necessary for me to stick to in order to be able to keep my hold of things, understand, until the game is up."

The nurse's eyes deepened. The lips that had not quivered for months took on pitiful curves. The ready tongue hesitated, and then slowly the commonplace, the only safe thing to say in this moment, pregnant with all possibilities for David Wilcox's soul, was said:

"I will begin at once. We can cover a good deal of ground if we work together."

Several times during the hours that followed David Wilcox voiced his appreciation of the nurse's generalship of his campaign in the, to him, unaccustomed phrase: "You're certainly what your uncle said—a dead-game sport." And each time a shadow, faint but unmistakable, dimmed her steady eyes.

Only once did the man's control waver, and that was when she spoke of his seeing his wife, back down home, before he started North. At length her will prevailed, and he promised; and then they returned to the impersonal charts of diet, drugs, temperatures, and other physical contingencies through whose intricacies she moved with such professional confidence.

"You must not plan another thing to-night," she finally said, with decision. "Since you are going from here tomorrow, you must get some rest at once."

His relieved acquiescence surprised her.

"I'm dog tired," he answered, "and that bed looks mighty good to me; but I hate to waste the time sleeping."

"Sleeping?" Did he think he *could* sleep? the nurse wondered, when, a little later, she sought her own bed.

Whether he thought so or not, he did sleep, and the morning found him firm in his purpose of *doing* while he died.

As he left the hospital to go to the wife back home, he lingered with the nurse's hand in his.

"When the game's up," he said, and a little of the old tremble crept into his voice, "and the stakes are to be handed over, will you come and help me to be a dead-game sport? I will be back at the end of the race. Will you come and help—then? Will you?"

It did not seem to the man to be much to ask of her, to whom death and dying were such a routine thing, and yet she hesitated, and then, as she withdrew her firm, slim-fingered hand from his, her promise was given. He felt chilled at its impersonal quality, even as he dismissed his disappointment with the remembrance that her profession had made her calloused and barren of real sympathy.

"If I can, I will come when you need me, of course," she promised.

When he was gone, quite gone, the nurse walked quickly to Room 107. She closed the door behind her, and, stooping, smoothed the perfectly smooth bed. She stood by the chair from which he had faced her in impotent rage at her challenge the day before. She picked up a dulled pencil which he had flung aside in irritation at its retarding his work. Slowly she passed long, sensitive fingers over the inanimate thing. Her great brown eyes filled with tears.

"He is such a dear boy!" she said. "Such a dear, brave boy! Oh, God, it is hard to meet death when one is but thirty-four!"

Early the following June, David Wilcox's return from the Canadian woods, where, with his beautiful wife, he had

been for nearly six months, seemed a modern miracle.

The house surgeon, reviewing the case for the benefit of the internes, concluded:

"It simply goes to prove, gentlemen, that you never can be sure. We had him here in one hundred and seven. I gave him six months at the most; would not have been surprised at six weeks; and now, at the end of six months, he actually nearly made it impossible for me to use a knife for six months when I gave him my hand to congratulate him over a child. Well, the man's sound as a dollar. It all goes to show," he repeated, "that we never can be sure."

In his home on the north shore, David Wilcox sat, an uncomfortably quiet man, tingling with restless vitality, by the bedside of his wife. In the adjoining room a nurse stopped to put a bundle, mostly blanket, in a beribboned bassinet.

The man's eyes followed those of his wife.

"Do you know, dear," he said, "she—that nurse—is all right, but I can't help wishing the nurse had come. I'd counted on her to give him—our boy—his start, because"—his hand closed tenderly on the weak hand in his—"you know, if it hadn't been for her, I'd never lived to see him—our boy—or—or anything." I can't understand why she sent no message except that 'impossible.' I wish I knew what kept her away after I put it the way I did in that letter I gave the doctor about wanting her to give him a start. She was sort of unfeeling for a woman, but she was so direct, and we do want him to be what she was as a little girl, 'a gentleman and a dead-game sport.' You know, dear, what I mean."

The other brown eyes, the dearer brown eyes, sweet with the glory of new motherhood, turned from the bassinet in the next room, and looked up at the man.

"Yes, yes, I know. I wanted her, too, for him—and, oh, he must be"—she hesitated, and refused the gambling phrase, and said: "Just like his father." Then, unconsciously using the other

phrase of her, the nurse: "A dear boy, a dear, *brave* boy."

A little later, as they talked in quiet murmurs of the child, their child, in the next room, and of the nurse who had sent him forth to a brave death to have him find life, a servant brought a black-bordered letter to the man.

Still thinking of the child and of the nurse who had not come when summoned, he read aloud:

"DEAR BOY OF 107: I find I cannot go, without sending you this message. When your plea came that I come and help her to life instead of you to death—believe me, friend, the first is the harder—I found it very bitter that I could not. The little race whose stakes I hold is almost over, and I weakly—after all, we nurses are not so different as you once thought—want you, who went so bravely away to live your death, to know that I, too, have held faithfully the stakes intrusted to me.

"You came to the hospital two weeks after the doctor gave me my death warrant, telling me I had less than a year of life unless I gave up my work absolutely at once; several years, if I spent them conserving my strength. Perhaps this is why you seemed more than a patient to me when you were in 107. You, with your warrant in your hand.

"Ah, friend, there is One who has the power of recall of those warrants and you, hurrying to meet death for the sake of others, in His great woods, found life.

"To me, it has been given these last months to continue to find life for others, and I am so tired, so tired that I am glad, glad the race is run, and within the hour, they tell me, I shall hand over the stakes He trusted to me. May the great race for the little gentleman which I *could* not start off be run over a clean road with a firm hand, for He who holds the big stakes for all of us will never be found wanting. Good night, my friend, who scorned to be a welsher."

When the man finished reading the last faintly written words, the young mother was sobbing in her pity. After a little, the man went to the next room, and brought the child and laid him in her arms, and she turned the little face to hers, and whispered:

"Little son, you and I have missed knowing a brave woman who tried to be a true gentleman, and became, instead, one of His ministering angels; but you shall bear her name."

The man bent over mother and child. "Her name!" he said. "Why, I never knew it! To me she was always just the nurse."



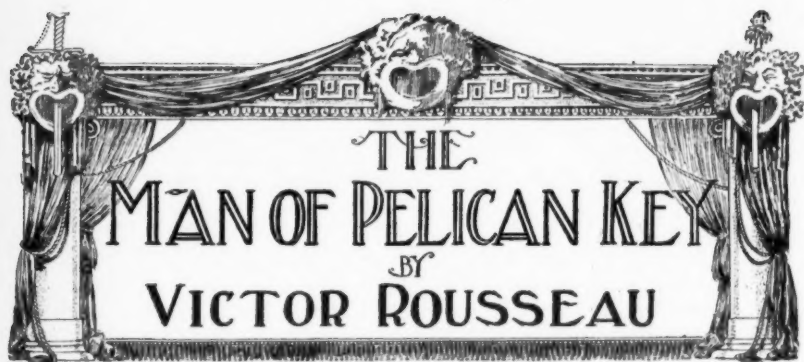
RESTLESSNESS

I COULD laugh dear love to scorn,
I could madly love's death mourn,
I could linger—I could go—
I could pray you pity so.
You must stop to listen.

I could weep to see faith die,
I could kill it at a sigh,
If to kill would cause you pain,
If one tear from you 'twould gain
One little tear to listen!

Cold of heart and void of soul,
How I love you past control,
All my restless self ensnare,
In the meshes of your hair,
Only stop—one hour—to listen!

VIRGINIA KLINE.



THE MAN OF PELICAN KEY BY VICTOR ROUSSEAU

WINTER was gone from Florida, though March was young. The ground was gay with phlox, there were buds on the oleanders, and from the stripped orange groves the scent of new blossoms, borne over miles of shoal water from key to key, scented the air of the declining afternoon. Everywhere were signs of spring; nets were staked round deep-water channels; the pelican flocks had flown to their breeding places on their protected isles; and most of the winter visitors had betaken themselves Northward.

The few men who remained sat on the porch of the huge winter hotel, whose shuttered windows and rows of fading palmetto plants, ranged on either side of the entrance hall, betokened the approaching end of the season. On the white beach, little waves lapped at the keels of the fishing boats drawn up on the high-water line, with warping ribs and folded canvas sails bleaching in the hot sunlight.

They had grouped themselves around two who, antithesis in mind and aspect, seemed naturally to complement each other. One was Turner, a leader of the Florida bar, middle-aged, incisive, whose strongly built figure seemed to radiate leadership. The other was ex-Governor Carson, the news of whose death, which was flashed over the wires last month, startled many who, knowing how long ago his name had been written

in history, wondered to learn that he had still lived on.

His life had been complete and strangely fortunate, first as Confederate soldier, then as a young lawyer, as State attorney, and later successively as congressman, senator, and governor of his State during two terms. Now, in his old age, he held high posts—commissioner of swamp lands, vice president of the Everglades commission, president of the pardons board.

It was upon duties connected with one or other of these offices that he was staying at the large winter hotel in this extreme corner of Florida, where the luxury of civilization blended with the wild and the unknown in the palmetto tangles and mangrove swamps three hundred yards from the seashore behind the hotel gardens. Looking at his great form, into the keen eyes, whose fires age had softened into a more kindly strength, one felt instinctively his dignity; one would have turned toward him still for leadership in any crisis.

The conversation had lagged. The declining sun, resting upon the low shore of Pelican Key, opposite, two miles across the pass, flashed on the great copper still of the turpentine camp, where the State's convicts worked out their sentences, turning it into a sphere of gold. The little wharf was visible, loaded with barrels of resin, and, resting alongside, a speck, rocking upon the waves, was seen through field

glasses to be a little motor boat, in which a figure sat, a carbine resting in the crook of the arm. By night one heard the throbbing of the motor as the boat patrolled the pass ceaselessly.

"It's a strange juxtaposition," Turner observed, "this hotel, the last word in luxury, and that camp, where civilization maintains her outcasts."

Ex-Governor Carson lifted his head from his great chest. The two men were always antagonistic in their opinions.

"Society must defend itself against its enemies," he answered. "If a man sin against men, his penalty must be of a nature calculated to deter others. Prisons must be places of dread."

As president of the pardons board, he had been called merciless—as much so as, when State attorney, he had stood up before unwilling juries, inexorably demanding the infliction of the extreme penalty. There had been no sentimental pardons during his régime.

A wisp of smoke fluttered around the point of the key. It signaled the up boat from Key West to Jacksonville. The men strolled idly toward the wharf. As the steamer approached, a crowd of passengers was seen leaning over the rails.

The ship carried a theatrical company, and as soon as the gangplank was in place they clattered down it ashore. There was something in their appearance that evoked pity rather than mirth.

It was not that this was a small, third-rate troupe that made its living in third-rate villages which its more prosperous rivals scorned. Such companies are numerous; but here was something more. There was scarcely a man or woman there but verged upon middle life. So long they had played together, accepting their jackal's share of the feast, that each individual seemed to have become partly merged in that of its neighbor. One read their hopelessness in the loud, purposeless laughter, the jests; they called each other by nicknames, men and women alike; theirs was a false camaraderie, born of despair and mutual necessity.

As their poor properties emerged

from the hold and were carried by the negro porters toward the tattered tent which was flung down upon the sands, they overflowed into the hotel, shouting, wrangling with the attendants.

On the hotel walls a gaudy poster flared.

"Belle Mortmore!" exclaimed one of the guests, studying it. "Why, I saw her eight years ago in Macon. That was she—that tired, middle-aged woman, with the crow's-feet and the curious, dead look in her eyes. When I saw her, she was quite pretty and young."

"Did you see her on the stage or off?" asked a cynical friend. "What are they giving us—'Hamlet'?"

The other pointed to the poster.

"'The Creole's Revenge,'" he answered, with a grimace.

"What—that old thing still running?"

"I'll wager you haven't seen it. It's not so bad."

"I don't need to," the other retorted. "I haven't seen 'Uncle Tom's Cabin,' either; but I know the sort of play that is. Innocent man, villain triumphant till act seven, when hero enters in stripes, and carries away the girl, amid the baying of bloodhounds. Why, man, this is the classic barnstormer of the South."

The billposter approached the group of men on the porch.

"You're coming, of course, to-night, gentlemen?" he said. "It's a great show. You've seen it, perhaps?" he asked of the ex-governor, who shook his head.

"But you've all heard of it," he urged. "You know, of course, Miss Mortmore acts her own life story. But what you don't know is—it took place hereabouts. Yes, gentlemen, upon that island yonder, before they set up a turpentine still. Ten years ago it was. Say, we expect the whole adult population of the county this evening. I've plastered every tree and every shack from here to Miami, and I stuck a poster right on the front gate of that convict camp. Miss Mortmore is, if I might say so, a national character."

"Has any one here seen this wonderful play?" asked the ex-governor sarcastically.

"I saw it in its original form," said Turner, stretching his leg across the rail. "That's true—that it's Belle Mortmore's life story. And it's one of the most inhumanly sad things I ever heard about."

The ex-governor clipped the end of his cigar, and stared into the void. Turner resumed his story.

"It must have been eleven—twelve years ago," he said. "It was in nineteen hundred. There was no camp on Pelican Key then; nothing but palmetto scrub, pines, mangroves, and oyster beds, and a tiny, old-fashioned hotel kept by a Frenchman named Louis, who had a reputation for his stone crabs. It was a place known to just a few actors and writers and such folks, who liked a quiet spot to go to to recuperate."

"Belle Mortmore was a girl then—comparatively a girl. She'd been born with that unhappy love of the stage which nothing can cure, and, though she belonged to an old family in Baltimore, she'd run away from home to join a traveling company run by a New Yorker named Enoch. Her father cast her off, and her family disowned her. She made something of a hit through the Southern States; she certainly was a discovery for Enoch, and when she took malaria in Jacksonville he sent her, not wanting to lose her, over to this place on Pelican Key, to rest and recover, intending to pick her up again when his company came round the peninsula three weeks later."

"It was a nice little lazy place, with fishing, and nothing else to do but lie in the shade of the palmetto trees all day and watch the Seminole come in from their secret haunts in the swamp lands, to trade manioc and blankets for groceries."

"Belle had been there about a week when there appeared upon the scene a fellow whom I'll call 'the unknown quantity.' Never mind his name. I know it, but it doesn't count for anything now. He was a Boer. This was in the middle of the South African war, and this man, with a lot of others, had been captured after a fight and sent to the Bahamas, the Bermudas not being

then ready for prisoners. Being isolated there, the prisoners were left to do pretty much as they pleased."

"I suppose there are men among these folks as cultivated as any of us, but this fellow had come from some backwoods region, where he had grown up like a savage. Until his capture, he had never seen a town, a railroad, a stone or brick house, or anything such as we associate with civilized ways. He was a white savage, taken from his native soil and thrust into this complex world of ours by act of war."

"In some way, he had got hold of a boat, and escaped from the Bahamas with an ugly bullet hole through his shoulder. And then, putting out to sea in this wretched cockleshell, like some Columbus, not even knowing that there were such things as maps—and that illustrates the quality of the man—he struck that chain of keys, and wandered from one to the next till chance threw him up on Pelican Shoals just at the time when destiny sent Belle Mortmore to the little hotel to shake off the malaria. So there they met."

"Why they should have been attracted to one another is one of those primal mysteries which can't be explained, but have to be accepted. He was fishing, and he had a festering wound which wasn't healing. She nursed him, and dressed his arm, spending whole days in his shack yonder, near the point of the island."

"Gentlemen, I leave you to picture the slowly awakening passion that either felt for each; he, the wild man, the white savage, wholly ignorant of the conventions of modern life, not realizing even how deep a gulf lay between them; and she, reared in wealth, wondering at his simplicity, amazed and startled at his audacity, and yet, in this intensely unreal atmosphere, losing her perspective as he had never gained one. They might have been the first parents of the human race, wooing each other in those solitudes, with only God to see as He walked in the tops of the rustling palmetto trees."

"Finally their love reached its crisis. He wanted her to leave everything, and

sail with him in his crazy craft for some unknown isle yonder"—he pointed eastward—"which he had explored, and, in his mind, annexed to himself. And Belle—wavered. All her past was clouded over, and, like some Lady of Shalott, she seemed to see a magical world unroll itself before her helpless eyes. On the next evening she was to give him his answer, and all night she lay in her bed, sleepless, wavering. And even when sobering day came she was not decided.

"That afternoon Enoch arrived unexpectedly from Key West. He had heard false rumors that another manager had obtained Belle's services, and was determined to forestall him.

"At sight of this man, a furious struggle awoke in her. Realization of the impossibility of the step she had contemplated, of the insensate folly of it, brought to life as the old ways of thought and existence came sweeping back on her, was accompanied by a maddening hatred for this coarse, good-natured New Yorker, with his old, easy ways and vulgar self-assurance. She felt then as though she were powerless to take any initiative, a mere spectator in this drama that was so swiftly unfolding round her. And so she abandoned herself to await the outcome.

"The few residents at the hotel had not failed to notice the flirtation, as they considered it, between Belle Mortmore and the young Boer. They thought she had been amusing herself with him, and that afternoon, when Enoch sat jesting in the smoking room, pouring out coarse stories through a haze of tobacco smoke, somebody told him. Enoch slapped his thigh with his fat hand, and roared in merriment.

"He joked with Belle about her 'affair.'

"'So you've not been idle, Belle, while you've been here?' he said. 'That ain't the ragged-looking Crusoe I saw down by the beach, is it? Say, Belle, let me in on the fun, won't you? Lead him on, and then tell him that I'm your husband, come from New York, and watch his face. Lord, it's as good as a play! As good as a play? It is a

play! We'll make one out of this, and call it "The Creole's Revenge."'

"Belle's heart was so full of hate she could not answer him. Now, this was about the time the Boer had been expecting her with her answer. He'd put his crazy skiff in trim, and patched his tattered sails, and presently he came sauntering up to the hotel. When Enoch saw him coming, he placed his arm round Belle's waist, and kissed her.

"'Gimme another!' he shouted boisterously. 'Say, ain't I the model husband, leaving you here while I've been slaving all over the U. S., to save the bank balance from going under?'

"The Boer was standing at his side when Enoch raised his face from the girl's. Enoch looked at him sneeringly; then he perceived that the other had pulled his fish knife from his belt. Enoch was a coward; he looked round, and tried to run. But Belle stood in his path."

"I thought so; I contended so," said the ex-governor suddenly.

Turner ignored his words.

"Enoch tried to stammer an explanation, but he might as well have talked to the wind. The Boer heard nothing. He only knew that there stood the man who had robbed him; he sprang for his enemy's throat. There was a struggle, one cry, the sound of metal on bone—and Enoch lay on the porch, breathing his last, a ghastly stab wound in his throat.

"So, you see, it's quite true that this play is founded on fact. I was the prisoner's counsel. The State asked for a capital sentence, and got one of life imprisonment. Later there was a movement to procure a pardon, but——"

He paused, and looked toward Carson.

"Yes, I fought it," said the ex-governor, straightening himself, and looking hard at the other. "And I shall fight it, and all such movements, whenever they arise. It was a dastardly, cold-blooded murder. But the woman ought to have suffered, too."

"She has suffered," said Turner quietly. "She has suffered more than the man." He turned to us. "Picture

her fate, gentlemen. Was there a legitimate company that would have admitted her to membership afterward, pursued as she was by the knowledge of such a crime? It followed her like Actæon's hounds; it branded her; men made coarse jests about her; she was driven, in the end, merely for bread, to accept an offer from a cheap vaudeville show, where she was exposed nightly to the jeers and the still worse applause of the populace. Think of her, ever sinking lower, ever more helpless, her talent useless, her womanhood cheapened by her associations, ambition crushed, and old age creeping on, condemned ever to rehearse the dreadful story of that hour on the porch of Louis' little hotel on Pelican Key. I ask you: Wasn't she punished?"

Long after the gathering had broken up, Turner walked beside Carson along the post board walk of the hotel, expostulating, arguing. They seemed to those who watched to be rehearsing that ten-year-old story, fighting that ancient fight over again in bitterness and hate.

Meanwhile, the tent had been erected upon the sands, a tattered, patched, dilapidated affair, with its sordid accessories of cheap cane chairs, benches, and bedaubed scenery. A crowd of countrymen, true to the agent's promise, had flocked into the village, and stood or squatted round upon the beach, stupidly gaping at the flamboyant posters in which Belle Mortmore postured.

The sun sank, and, with the swiftness common in those low latitudes, darkness came rushing over the sea. The night was moonless; at first the stars shone brightly, but soon a death-white fog crept in from the keys, blotting out all familiar landmarks.

When, after dinner, the visitors repaired to the tent and took their places, it was seen that Turner and his old enemy were fighting still. They stationed themselves well toward the rear of the auditorium; there was, at least, no desire on the part of either to embitter further the wretched woman by any disclosure which might serve to revive unhappy memories.

Almost everybody has seen "The Creole's Revenge," and knows the great scene between *Blanche Kemp* and the convict in the second act; knows how, under cover of a fog, he breaks away from the prison to seek his love, and the dramatic dialogue that ensues while outside the pursuers are hammering at the door.

This scene had just been staged, and the curtain risen. Belle Mortmore was upon the stage alone. In the auditorium the gaping yokels and the more sophisticated winter visitors were alike held for the moment by the power of the woman. There was something of sheer tragedy there; the darkened auditorium heightened the effect, which had something of realism in it.

"By George! She would have made an actress!" murmured somebody at my side.

And then, across the heads of the audience, the eyes of Belle Mortmore and those of the ex-governor met.

A sudden terror clutched her; the recognition was instantaneous. She clutched for support at the table by which she stood; it only heightened the illusion; the audience thought this part of the play. The deathly fog crept into the tent and blurred everything; even the actress was blurred in a shroud of fog. Outside, a gun boomed faintly; another—another. It was the supreme moment of the tragedy. And then—

Up through the auditorium he came, a man in rags and stripes, with bleeding hands, which had grappled with thorn scrub, and on his face a look of set ecstasy that I have never seen before. Straight through the center of the crowd he advanced, leaped upon the stage, and stood confronting her; both heightened in stature, and at the same time made more unreal by the white fog that enshrouded them. The audience, loosened from the spell, and thinking this man a part of the play, applauded lustily.

He stared into her eyes, and thus, for a full minute, they stood face to face. Then, without a word, he placed his hand upon hers, and led her off the stage. The audience waited.

And the stage was empty. They

clapped, shouted. Neither appeared again.

Suddenly the tent was torn violently from the rear. Shouts were heard, a confusion of sound. The lights flared up and went out. The tent poles swayed. There was a panic-stricken rush for the entrance. Outside, men were running and calling, thrusting one against the other in the cloudy night.

"What is it? What is it?" somebody called.

"A convict from Key West?"

"Here?"

"Impossible!"

They were running now, and figures of guards appeared, with rifles over their backs and in their arms. Suddenly, as if by instantaneous suggestion, they turned and ran toward the beach, where the waves lapped fitfully. The

chugging of a motor boat was heard. Two men leaped in.

"There! Toward the point of the isle!" they called.

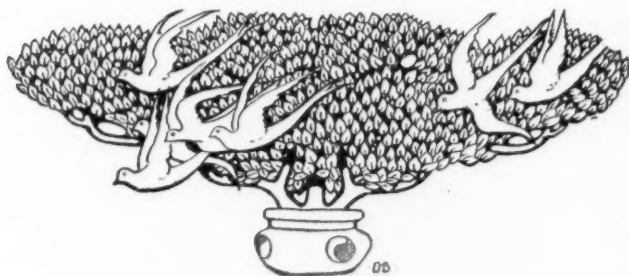
And suddenly the moon appeared above the drifting fogs, shone forth, and conquered them. And in the center of the broad streak upon the face of the pass was a tiny sailing boat, and in it two figures that huddled close.

The guard raised his rifle, and took aim. Then the weapon was struck up violently. The man turned angrily, and saw—the ex-governor.

"Why, what the——" he stammered. "That's him—the convict who got away this evening."

The ex-governor struck the rifle out of the fellow's hands.

"Let him alone," he said. "I have his pardon in my pocket."



A WARRIOR

CLAD in no shining panoply of mail,
With helm and hauberk and with falchion dight,
Did he go forth to battle for the right
Like those of old who sought the Holy Grail;
Nor yet that faith and freedom might prevail
Did he charge sheer on some embattled height,
Where shotguns belched forth their lurid light
And poured on those below their iron hail.

Yet, he wore honor ever for his shield,
Although no foe upon the foughten field,
Save Wrong, he faced with valiant undismay;
Nay, not the very flower of chivalry
Won victories more glorious than he—
This warrior in the lists of every day.

CLINTON SCOLLARD.



The TAMING of the SHREW by MARIEL BRADY

A HOT and unwearied sun blazed relentlessly down on the breathless city. It was Saturday afternoon, and crowds of holiday tourists jammed the boats, packed the cars, and surged, in a never-ending mass, toward the parks.

Hollister, cool-looking in his white linens, stopped on the corner where a little crowd of coatless men had gathered about a large thermometer.

"Wow!" exclaimed a portly and perspiring individual, pursing his dry lips. "One hundred and four degrees! Me for the sylvan solitude of the cellar!"

The group of men grinned at his re-treating back, and slowly disintegrated. Hollister pursued a tranquil way to the park. A haunting memory of a cool and shady nook which he had once chanced upon drew his steps. Avoiding the mall and the frequented paths, he struck boldly across country.

Presently there came to his ears the complaining tinkle of a little brook, fretting its way over unsympathetic stones. The trees took on a darker green; the grass beneath his feet grew lush and long.

Hollister removed his hat and brushed back the damp hair from his forehead. A little wandering air, cool and sweet with an unnamable fragrance, caressed his face.

"Twenty degrees cooler!" he said aloud. "I'll stay here forever!"

"Well, I guess you won't!" snapped a wrathful voice; and from the other side of a bush he beheld a wrathful face frowning at him.

"I—I beg your pardon," murmured Hollister helplessly, twirling his hat. This was not the way in which young ladies had been wont to address him. "I—I had no idea you were here."

The receiver of this brilliant piece of information frowned again.

"Probably not," she returned coldly. "Men have so few ideas. I don't see how they get along."

Hereupon she turned her blue-dimity back upon the idealless intruder, and began to wind in her line in business-like fashion.

Comprehension broke upon the dazed Hollister.

"Oh, I say," he began boyishly. "You were fishing, and I blundered in, like a chuckle-headed idiot, and spoiled sport. No wonder you were cross!"

The blue dimity whirled around.

"Cross! I am never cross, thank you. But when a person is quietly fishing, and a great big man comes trumpeting around and scares away the fish, the person is perfectly justified in resenting his intrusion."

Hollister grinned. He was beginning to enjoy himself.

"Don't stop at gentle hints," he advised equably. "'Resenting his intrusion!' You talk like a schoolma'am."

"Why not?" demanded the blue dimity crisply. "Was one for three years in Bridgeport, Conn. Ever taught in Bridgeport?"

"No," said Hollister humbly.

"Well, don't," advised the ex-schoolma'am calmly, and turned her back again.

Hollister looked critically at a certain

alluring curl of bronze-gold hair resting just behind a small white ear. Then he seated himself deliberately on the grass and took his white linen knees into his embrace.

"*Sic transit gloria Bridgeporti*," he murmured tranquilly, "and not one regretful sigh! I'm afraid you're a hard-hearted lady."

She flung a disdainful grimace over her shoulder.

"Hearts are not mentioned in a teacher's certificate," she remarked dryly, folding her rod as she spoke; "and in the physiology they are defined as a large ganglion or muscle."

"So young and so untender!" sighed Hollister, biting a long blade of grass. "Now, when I was young——"

He stopped, bewildered with the radiance of her sudden flashing smile.

"Well preserved, aren't you?" she queried blandly. "How do you manage it? Massage or electricity?"

Hollister felt himself flushing hotly. The youthful roundness of his face, the boyish wave of his hair had often been a source of keen mortification to him.

"That's too bad," he protested quickly. "I don't think I deserved that thrust, Miss—Miss——"

"Maybe its Mrs.," she suggested idly, picking up a cushion and a magazine. "Mrs. Jones. How do you like that?"

"Not at all!" retorted Hollister sharply. "I refuse to believe in the Mrs.; and you don't look in the least like a Jones."

"Jones isn't a bad name," she urged meditatively. "The Lord must love the Joneses—He made so many of them."

Silence greeted this cheerful remark. Presently she sent a careful glance from under heavy lashes at his moody face.

"Can't swallow the Jones yet? Well, maybe it isn't Jones. Maybe it's Smith. What don't you like about that?"

"I don't like this whole thing!" burst out Hollister impetuously. "What is a girl like you roaming about alone for? Good Lord! Here you are, miles from anywhere, calmly fishing by yourself. Suppose a bounder of a fellow came along! Suppose a thousand horrors! A white rose of a girl like you ought to

be swinging in a hammock on a broad veranda, waited on by—by everybody. And here you are—and here I am—a big, helpless hulk of a man, unable to do anything about it because of a lot of infernal conventions. Do you know what I'd like to do? I'd like to take you by those defiant shoulders and shake you—hard—and then pick you up and carry you home—and see that you stayed there."

Helpless laughter shook her. She made a sweeping gesture toward the surrounding trees.

"Mount Pelee in eruption!" she declared sonorously. "Note the force of the terrible detonations! Mark the fiery flow of molten lava from the crater, the terrific belching forth of——"

Hollister's hurt expression stopped her. She sank down penitently upon the grass beside him.

"Don't worry, Sir Galahad," she said gently. "You see, a bounder didn't come along; and, if he had, there wouldn't have been much bound left in him after the Bridgeport school-ma'am got through with him. See that muscle?"

Hollister's fascinated eyes clung to the round, white arm she held before them; so gentle, so white, so satin smooth. He looked at her gray eyes—eyes which met his as frankly as a boy's might have done, and he sighed a little. No coquetry there. He sighed again as she pulled down the blue sleeve.

"Just the same," he said firmly, "you ought not to be here."

Sudden anger clouded her eyes.

"Ought!" she mimicked bitterly. "All my life has been bounded by that hateful, hateful word! When father died, and things went to smash, all my friends said I 'ought' to take up teaching. I took it up for three ghastly years. I used to love children; now I hate them. That's the splendid result of 'ought.' Then I took the civil-service examination, and through one of father's old friends got a position here. My friends congratulated me. They said I 'ought' to be happy. Happy! Do you know what monotony means? Have you ever counted bills day in and

day out for two years on a salary of eighteen dollars a week? Mentally, I've been a thief. Mentally, I've stolen thousands and thousands—enough to take me out of that grinding treadmill forever.

"Shocked, aren't you? Well, the Bridgeport schoolma'am would have been shocked, too. She'd have drawn her virtuous skirts about her and passed by on the other side, like the priest and the Levite; but this new entity which is I—well, it takes a good deal to shock her. For one year I went down to that awful grim building where you are locked in—think of it, locked in—like a meek slave to its labor, and then I rebelled. I became a lawbreaker for the sheer pleasure of it. Oh, I can sympathize with criminals!

"I steal time from the government. I steal my brains, thinking my own thoughts while my hands work automatically. Once one of those poor male automatons asked me to marry him. Think of the ghastly idea! I steal hours from the night, roaming about in safe wild places where I can forget I'm a human machine in the employ of the government. That's why I'm here today. There's a law against fishing in this brook. I'm breaking that law. Don't you see I have to break laws or turn into that thing I fear and hate—an automaton?"

"So bad as that?" queried Hollister gently. "Well, I'm an employee of the government, too. I——"

"I don't believe it!" she denied flatly. "I could tell one in Egypt. The men are all poured from the same mold—small, dapper, a little bald at twenty-five; the women—oh, what's the use? They talk about Miss Smith's puffs not matching her own hair, and about the scandalous conduct of Mr. Brown in sending roses to Miss White, and he a married man; and about the awful rents, and the terrible work the wash-women do; and the younger ones talk about what he said and the dances at Chevy Chase. Year after year of it! Did you ever hear it said that mankind is divided into three classes; the lowest, those who think only of people; the sec-

ond, those who think only of things; and the third and highest, those who think only of ideas?"

"The asylums get that last class after a while," commented Hollister bluntly. "A judicious mixture of all three would seem a satisfactory combination to my mind."

He turned, smiling, and found himself gazing into cool, offended gray eyes.

"I think I must be insane," remarked their owner icily. "Will some one kindly inform me why I am sitting here giving the unabridged story of my life to a totally strange man? It must be the heat."

With a swirl of blue-dimity skirts, she vanished behind the huge tree at her right. The astounded Hollister leaned back against a convenient tree, and waited. Nothing happened. Not a glimpse of blue in any direction. He closed his eyes, and spoke aloud:

"Will some one kindly inform me why I am sitting here awaiting the re-appearance of a totally strange young woman? A young woman not in the least likely to turn into an automaton; a young woman with little imps dancing in her gray eyes and a fetching curl behind her ear, and the prettiest hands in the world—and a devilish temper?"

He opened his eyes quickly and cocked an attentive ear. Had an unseen some one with the aforesaid temper smashed an unseen something, or was it the breeze in the treetops? He closed his eyes again and resumed his monologue:

"I am a distinctly eligible person. I never waited for a young lady in my life. In fact, I have fled from them. To speak indelicately, I have been chased. It seems to be quite a profession among mothers and daughters in these days—chasing."

Silence, deep and profound, broken only by the drowsy cheep of insects along the edges of the tinkling brook. With the stealth of an Indian, the prostrate Hollister drew himself halfway to the huge tree. There he paused, and addressed space again.

"A young person in a blue gown—and the aforesaid temper—has broken

laws, righteous laws of the land. Ought—a word she dotes on—ought she not to be handed over to the tender mercies of the park cop?"

Again he cocked his ear. Did he hear stifled laughter? Unmindful of his once immaculate garb, he hitched a foot nearer.

"A fellow feeling makes us wondrous kind," he murmured plaintively. "The recording angel has a few broken laws to my credit also. Though a servant of the government, I must be false to my trust and protect this misguided young person who fishes in tu'penny streamlets where there are no fish. I wot of a rushing river on land I own where the silver trout leap in the whirling flood. Beyond are the falls—great, seething fellows—and on either side rise the solemn mountains, amber and rose and amethyst, peak on peak, far into the sapphire sky. I have never wanted to share that place with any one. To-day, I am conscious of a strong desire to share it with—one."

He spoke the last word almost under his breath. Then he shook his head and cast sentiment aside.

"All that lovely rhetoric wasted! Perhaps she had an overdose in Bridgeport, Conn. Perhaps the female automatons rave rhetorically about the beauties of Chevy Chase. Swains, take notice. Confine the important question to four words, all monosyllables except one."

His whimsical smile suddenly changed into a frown. A trailing blackberry vine had clutched his marauding ankles in a painful grip. Hollister freed himself in eloquent silence, and stood erect. He was now directly behind the huge tree, and he addressed it confidentially.

"Something serious is the matter with me. You may believe it or not, but I was a well-brought-up child. Never were my stiffly starched garments besmeared with butter or bedewed with molasses. Yet here I am, deliberately ruining my snowy apparel with grass stains. And to what end? The ethics of the occasion strictly forbid me to peep behind this tree; but something stronger than ethics or conventions, or——"

He stopped abruptly, and his jaw dropped. Before him stood the lady of the blue dimity, a newspaper held stiffly erect in front of her, and accusing eyes fixed upon a very excellent half tone of Hollister himself.

"Senator Stephen Hollister," said the lady sternly, "supper is served."

Perhaps Maeterlinck or Ibsen, Shaw or Pinero, those brilliant dissectors of the varied and complex emotions of which the human mind is capable, would have been able to classify those which reduced Stephen Hollister, able lawyer and experienced diplomat, to a dumb and staring yokel. Gone was the savoir faire which had distinguished him at the court of St. James, and won him favor in the lovely eyes of many a titled dame and the bitter envy of his less-favored brethren of the legation. Staring and dumb still, he obeyed the imperious wave of a white hand, and preceded the lady to the other side of the tree.

Upon the grass was spread a dainty hemstitched cloth. Wild-grape leaves served as plates, and on one of huge dimensions reposed a pile of lettuce sandwiches. Two boiled eggs occupied the seat of honor in the mathematical center of the cloth, and close to them stood an opened bottle of stuffed olives. A red-cheeked peach, a golden pear, and two purple plums added éclat to the impromptu feast.

Again the imperious little hand motioned, and Senator Stephen Hollister, the one-time guest of princes, sank down humbly upon the grass. The lady established herself on the other side of the cloth and helped herself to a sandwich.

"Most oppressive weather we're having," she remarked conversationally. "Please help yourself, senator. My butler has the toothache."

"Thank you," murmured the grass-stained guest, gazing at his untasted sandwich.

The hostess crooked her little finger elegantly, and assumed the languid, bored expression of the inveterate dinner giver.

"So good of you to drop in, my dear senator. Unexpected guests are always such a pleasure. The Russian ambas-

sador, dear, funny man, dropped in to tea yesterday, and left cards for an exclusive little affair at the embassy next week. Shockingly bad luck, for we can't make it. Week-ending in the mountains, you know."

She sighed delicately, and fished a plump olive from its lair with the aid of a frightfully long silver hatpin. Impaled on its point, she held out the delectable green thing to her still silent guest.

"No? Well, I can sympathize with you, my dear senator. It took me quite some time to educate myself above prunes. Society is a constant sacrifice, isn't it?"

She nibbled daintily at the olive, her eyebrows arched, her little finger still elegantly crooked. Hollister stirred restlessly, his eyes fixed miserably on a large green stain on his left knee.

"How does the committee stand in the Mexican business?" remarked the lady, spearing a second olive with the ease born of long practice. "I understand—"

"Stop!" burst out the tortured Hollister mercely. "How dare you make conversation with me? How dare you?"

A quick gleam came into the gray eyes watching him; and it was the voice of the blue-dimity young person which answered crisply:

"A young woman with a devilish temper dares anything, my dear senator."

Hollister groaned.

"Rub it in," he urged wretchedly. "Don't you see I'm down—flat? You've got me just where you want me."

"Not quite," amended the young woman calmly. "When I see you bestowing your senatorial approval upon those lettuce sandwiches which I cut my finger to make, mind you, then I might agree with you."

Hollister rose tempestuously.

"May I sit on your side of the—*the* hemstitching?" he queried eagerly. "I feel like a very small boy in very black disgrace over here."

She considered his pleading face for a moment, and then she nodded.

"If I hadn't chucked discipline when

I quit Bridgeport, I'd keep you there for the good of your soul," she observed carelessly. "Have an egg, senator. We'll pray they're hard; but, like Scotch Jamie, 'I hae me doots.'"

Hollister put down the egg and faced her. He was quite pale.

"Will you oblige me by forgetting that handle to my name, please? If you drag that in once more, it will completely spoil the pleasantest afternoon I have ever had. I—I'm a lonesome sort of fellow when all is said and done."

"Lonesome? You?" His neighbor opened incredulous gray eyes. "Wait until you know the hall-bedroom feeling before you talk of loneliness! Why, you go everywhere. The doors of every home in the city are open to the youngest bachelor in the Senate."

Hollister's smile was a little grim.

"Doors and people are not a panacea for loneliness, ex-schoolma'am," he said slowly. "Haven't you learned that yet? It is quite true that my engagement book is always overflowing. I know the faces, the mannerisms, the small talk which make up the social game in all its phases. *Cui bono?* Loneliness and I are still boon companions."

The blue-dimity lady jumped up and marched around to where Hollister had first been seated.

"You'll have me bawling in a minute, you depressing person," she remarked severely. "And bawling interferes with eating, and I'm hungry. Got a pocket-knife? I'd have brought one if I'd known you were coming."

With mathematical exactness she divided the peach and the pear, and placed a purple plum beside each portion. Then she produced a silver folding cup, and filled it with the cool water from the tinkling brook.

"If you're one of those germ fiends, let it alone," she warned Hollister. "I'm not. It will take more than one infinitesimal little microbe to kill me."

She smiled impudently, and sank her even, white teeth in the purple plum. Hollister gazed, fascinated. Sensations, hitherto unknown, swayed him. His heart beat painfully. His tongue was dry against his dry lips.

"You—you're beautiful!" he blurted. "I am not!" she contradicted serenely. "Intelligent, if you like, but not beautiful. That temper you spoke of has put a nasty wrinkle between my eyes; and my nose isn't pure Greek, and my eyes are green sometimes, and my hair is too long to comb in puffs, and——"

Hollister's boyish laugh cut short this catalogue of fell deformities. She flushed a little under his gaze as he leaned toward her.

"Did you ever think," he began impetuously, "how pleasant it would be to have the—the one you cared for most opposite you at table three times a day? To talk if you both wished to talk, to fall into companionable silences, to begin and end the days—together? Out home, among the mountains, is my house; a very old house; a long, low, rambling house. In the southern corner, opening on the wide veranda, is the dining room. In summer, roses and honeysuckle riot over the windows, and the sunlight streams in and makes the silver glitter dazzlingly. In winter, a huge fire roars in the big stone fireplace, and throws a ruddy glow over the whole room. When I go there, unless I fill the old house with friends, I am the lonesome chap I told you about. Will you think me an utter cad if I tell you I have pictured a good many girls I have known as being opposite to me at my table—and that no picture ever seemed to fit the frame? I am thirty-six years old. I have despaired of ever finding her. But I have found her—to-day."

No confused maiden listened to his last low words. The wrathful frown had returned to the blue dimity lady's brow.

"I shall not pretend to misunderstand you," she said coldly. "May I ask if this is a habit with you? It would seem quite unusual for a senator to propose to a nameless girl with whom he flirted in the park."

All the tenderness fled from Hollister's eyes. He got up and faced her.

"Does it mean that to you?" he demanded hotly. "If I recall the definition of the word, flirting is attention without intention. My intention is very

serious, indeed. You called yourself a lawbreaker a while ago. You gloried in it. Now you mock me because I have broken through the silliest law, the most idiotic convention that society ever fastened on the world; the one that says a decent man and woman may not speak to each other until some person has mumbled a meaningless form of introduction over them. The biggest rascal unhung could dance with you, could clasp you in his arms, provided a chap you knew introduced him. And I—I, who knew you at sight for mine—I must stand aside and let you slip out of my life. I have offended your dignity. I—flirted—with you!"

He turned away. Gall and wormwood were in his soul. He had opened his secret heart to her, and she had mocked him. He would never look at her soulless, heartless face again. He would go out home, and let his dogs and his horses minister to him. Poor, faithful brutes! They knew a friend when they saw one.

A hand just brushed his with rose-leaf touch.

"Please, is he awful mad?" murmured a wheedling voice. "After all, I spoke first. You couldn't have spoken to me if I hadn't let you."

Hollister wheeled instantly. He looked into that soulless, heartless face, and a mist clouded his sight; and to the blue-dimty lady, gazing straight through his kind, brown eyes to the clean soul behind them, came the keen compunction that mothers know when they have punished a heedless but lovable child. She spoke breathlessly.

"I—I like you very much."

Hollister drew in his breath, but he did not touch her. Instead, he glanced at the flaming west, then quizzically at his green-and-white garments.

"Like Excelsior, the shades of night must be falling fast before I through yonder village pass," he said gravely. "I have no desire to head a mob; and a young lady with the aforementioned temper might very properly object to a green-and-white escort. But when I do get back, I'm going to fine-comb that city until I find a person who can prop-

erly introduce us. Until then, you don't get out of my sight."

A mischievous smile hovered about the pretty mouth of the blue-dimity lady.

"I thought you despised conventional introductions, that they didn't matter," she murmured.

"They matter now," answered Hollister grimly. "We've established a precedent, and that's enough. I don't propose to have a successor next Saturday afternoon. Here and now we return to law and convention. Probably I shall court you in the stereotyped fashion before I propose formally. Let's go over under that tree and look at the sunset. It's gorgeous to-night."

"No," said the blue-dimity lady mutinously, "I'm going home—alone."

"Your usual penetration has failed you," Hollister rejoined determinedly. "You are not going home alone, and you are going to wait and see the sunset."

"I can run well," she taunted him, and immediately proved it.

It was a pretty race, and well run by them both. The blue-dimity lady declared afterward that if she had known where the goal was she would certainly have been the winner. As it was, even an agile, blue-dimity lady, urged on by a devilish temper, was no match for a certain active gentleman by the name of Hollister. She faced him, backed against a tree, crimson, panting, laughing-eyed.

Panting, crimson, serious-eyed, he made a prison house for her, his hands on either side of her against the tree.

"You've been—used—to twentieth-century wooers," he panted. "Perhaps—you'll realize—some day—you've got a cave man—on your trail—now! If you—run—again—you'll force me—to do the club act. Do you surrender?"

He let his arms drop at his sides and

looked at her. Breathing quickly still, her hands clasped on her heart, she looked back at him, fearlessly, honestly, a little wonderingly, perhaps, at the depth of feeling she saw in his eyes.

With an exquisite gesture, half appeal, half surrender, she held out her clasped hands.

"You win," she said, a little color rising in her cheeks. "You win—now. But wait a while. I'll lead you a dance, I promise you."

Before he could touch her hands, she had lifted them to her tumbled hair in the coaxing, mysterious movements all pretty women use. Hollister watched the process admiringly.

"I'm so glad you don't wear a hairdresser's stock on your head," he remarked fervently. "Why don't all women have hair like yours?"

"How do you know they don't?" she flung back saucily. "There! Now I'm ready to—"

"Sit down here and admire the sunset," finished Hollister gravely. "Come!"

She eyed him, one foot poised for flight. The wayward gypsy spirit within her called for freedom, called fiercely. Her troubled eyes sought Hollister's, were caught, and held. Sighing a little, she dropped down beside him.

Great banners of crimson and gold streamed across the western heavens. Pink-edged, baby clouds floated lazily above the treetops. The two under the tree gazed silently at the pageant in the sky. And then the blue-dimity lady spoke, and her voice was very dreamy.

"I want to hear more about that old house. Go back to the beginning and tell me everything. Begin now: 'When I was a little boy—'"

And Hollister, his eyes resting blissfully upon the bright head where a last shaft of sunlight lingered, began.

The OLD WOMAN

BY

FRANK HEDBURN CRAWFORD.

THE old woman toiled with puny effort at the crank of the well. The heat of the sun beating down upon her was withering in its intensity.

Her arms, bared to the elbow, were thin, and the fingers of her hands were twisted and the knuckles swollen.

The toothed wheel of the well complained rustily, and the little buckets of the endless chain spurted their water out spasmodically through a wooden spout, from which the water splashed down into a rust-eaten sprinkling can that leaked around its seamed bottom.

When the can was filled, the woman lifted it by the handle, using the fingers of the other hand to help hold it and to stop with her finger ends what leaks she could.

Unlovely and stiff of limb, she moved slowly through the hot sunlight.

A ragged flower bed was on the unshadowed side of the weather-beaten little farmhouse, where grew a patch of fragile-petaled, long-stemmed crimson poppies, a row of yellow marigolds, and a tangle of nasturtiums, among whose waxen leaves glowed here and there a splash of vivid color.

Close up around the house from every side had pushed a rank and sun-parched growth of flaunting weeds and unkempt seeding grasses, while beyond these were fields of wheat and corn, ill kept and backward in their growth, above which hung a quivering film of heat.

The little garden, with its flaming colors, was the one bit of loveliness amid this farce of husbandry, and the old woman brought to it through the sun the water from the well.

With the gentleness of affection, she parted the leaves, and let the water drip down to the thirsty roots.

The green, unopened bud of a poppy drooped heavily earthward.

"Tired, little one?"

She gave of her water most freely there.

The can was a small one, and the water did not last for long.

The woman rose ungracefully to her feet, and moved stiffly through the sun to the well, and back again with more water, after an interval of resting.

She knelt on the earth beside the bed, because it hurt her back to bend so far, and breathed the fragrance of the hot, moist earth with pleasure.

It was as though a young mother might be kneeling beside a cradle, with face close down toward a baby cheek, catching the perfume of an infant's breath.

But this woman was old, inagile, unlovely, and poorly garbed—no more than a withered crone.

She parted the tangled waxen leaves of the nasturtium vines with her fingers, turning the flower faces up to hers, taking delight in their unsullied beauty.

She even murmured little, half-inaudible phrases of caressing to them.

But this was not senility, although it was true that the blood no longer flushed her cheeks with color, that the tissue of her flesh had wasted away, leaving her features filled with many wrinkles, that her hair was sparse and gray, and that her hands were talonlike and her limbs enfeebled.

It was merely that these things gave an air of incongruity to that passionate love of color and beauty and grace which would have seemed quite natural in one of whom beauty and grace were themselves a part.

The woman did not pluck any of the flowers. To have done that would have been to end their lives. It was not that she might kill them that she had coaxed them into living.

Before she rose from among them, she wiped her damp forehead with a corner of her brown apron, and pushed back a few straggling gray hairs beneath her brown sunbonnet. When she did get up from her stooping position, the sudden rush of blood made her giddy, and she stood a moment before attempting to walk away through the heat toward the house.

Two steps led up to a porch around the front door, and the porch was a small affair, and the sun beat down on it scorchingly. But within the house the heat was not less stifling, and there was no movement of air.

The old woman carefully pulled an ancient rocking-chair over into the single patch of shadow at one corner of the porch.

The chair was on the verge of falling apart, being held together with twisted strands of wire and bits of string, whose loose ends dangled here and there like danger signals at the weaker joints.

The woman had learned by long experience just how to adjust her weight to this support so as not to break it apart.

She seated herself in it, and sat in the patch of shadow, fanning herself with an old newspaper.

To the left, she could see the flame and glow of her flowers. Before her, a rocky lane led down to the distant

yellow ribbon of dust that was the lonely, seldom-traversed road.

Suddenly the woman's chair creaked alarmingly, and she sat erect, forgetting to fan herself with the newspaper, while she peered far up the road.

A cloud of yellow dust had risen there, and it floated heavily over across the fields.

Some one was coming down the little-used road.

This was an affair of much interest to the lonely old woman. It was most unusual for any one to come down that road on a hot Sunday afternoon. She continued to peer excitedly.

As this dust disturbance came nearer, she could see in front of it here a glint of sun-touched brass and there the sheen of dark-blue enamel.

An automobile! This was, indeed, an event.

With an eagerness of wondering speculation not unmixed with regret that it would soon be gone, she observed its progress along the level stretch of road beyond the farm.

To her the car was a sign of wealth and power—a token of the ease and comfort and convenience that wealth alone could bestow; a symbol of the gentleness and courtesy that must be attributes of such as were not made harsh and heedless by the constant grind of poverty.

She indulged in a hundred imaginings about this car and those who might be in it. Where was it from, and where was it going? Who was in it, and where did they live, and what did they do, these people who did not need to work?

This woman, whose only happiness was in her few simple flowers, tried to realize what limitless possibilities for the enjoyment of happiness must be within the power of those others.

Suddenly she was seized by a panic of astonishment.

The car had stopped at the entrance to the lane! A man and a girl were getting out of it. The girl she did not know, but the tall form of the man she had once seen before. He was the owner of this farm for which her son

paid rent. They were walking up the lane toward the house!

In a tremble of nervous excitement, the woman rose from her rickety chair, and hurried inside the house, untying the strings of her brown sunbonnet and apron as she went.

She laid these across the foot of her wooden bed, and, unbuttoning her gray wrapper, stepped out of it as it slipped to the floor. She stood a moment in her short, striped flannel petticoat of faded blue, listening for the possible sound of footsteps outside, and then hastily took from a nail in the closet her best blue calico wrapper and a clean blue-checked gingham sunbonnet, which she put on and fastened with a trembling eagerness of haste.

As she came out on the sunny porch again, the man and the girl had reached the step.

"How do you do? How do you do?" she welcomed them. "Won't you come up and set down? Oh, I must get you chairs! Don't try that one, miss; no one can set in that without it breaking but me. I'll get chairs. I have a good one."

"Oh, don't trouble yourself. I can sit here on the step quite nicely, thank you."

"Oh, no! I have another one—a good one."

Presently the old woman came dragging a chair out through the doorway.

"And now one for you, sir. I think I have another one. I think—I'll go look."

She went again within the house, and was gone several moments. At last she reappeared, backing slowly across the sill with a little low wooden chair.

"I—I couldn't find another one, sir—a good one. I—"

The man was not there.

"Mr. Grenville didn't wait," explained the girl. "He has gone down to look at the barn. The roof was leaky—or something."

"Oh, yes—oh, yes! Whenever the rain comes—the roof is so old, you see. It has been patched. But it is so old."

There was a pause.

The old woman took quick note of

the girl's appearance—her perfectly tailored tan suit, the collar and cuffs edged with pink-and-black silk embroidery; her thin, white, low-necked waist, with a little gold pin at the throat, from underneath which showed the faint flush of a pink silk bow across her bosom; her black hat and black embroidered face veil, and the other veil over the hat that fell in a filmy cascade of delicate pink about the girl's shoulders.

"You're not just pretty, dearie," she volunteered, with the bluntness of old age, "but you're more than that. How straight you set in that little chair! And how firm your shoulders! And then the way you hold your head, and the look in those brown eyes of yours! Are you going to marry—him?"

"What a question! Mr. Grenville was kind enough to ask me to come down with him to see his lower farm. How warm it has been! Do you live here all alone?"

"Oh, my son—he's away to-day. And his wife. A good for nothing, that! I told him! I told him what she was. But no—he would marry her. And her with a boy of her own going on seven years!"

"Then she was married before?"

"Her? Oh, no! Not her! I told him what she was! But would he listen?"

"I see," replied the girl evenly. "How dry the summer has been."

She looked with critical disapproval over the field of backward corn.

"A little more rain—"

"Rain! Oh, yes, the rain! Don't I know? If he had a woman like you'll make some man, would things look like that? The sun! The rain! Don't I know?"

"Have you lived here long?"

"Long? Oh, well—this chair here with the string to hold it now, we got that the year we come here, my man and me, and that was the year before the first boy was born; and if he'd lived he'd of been thirty-seven now. That makes it thirty-eight past, doesn't it?"

"Thirty-eight years! We had good things then, my man and me. This was

a good chair. I keep it. Oh, well—we're poor.

"That woman!

"But I have my chair and my flowers. I never pick them. I catch the seeds and plant them over. She laughs! Is it a craziness to love anything clean and pretty? I talk to those flowers sometimes. Well, do I think they hear me? But they are clean, and so pure! Like nothing so much as a little smooth-cheeked baby—your first one. Well, yes, that first one. You don't forget.

"You will know. Oh, yes—those proud brown eyes of yours! But you will know.

"Are you going to marry—him?"

At this moment the girl's companion appeared at the corner of the porch. He was older than she, and his hair, brushed pompadour, was beginning to show gray about his temples. But he was tall, though a trifle stooped, and his cheeks were ruddy. The lines of his face from jaw to cheek bones were firm to hardness, and his cold blue eyes held no deep lights, just surface shimmerings.

As he stepped to the porch smilingly, he removed his hat, and, with a bow, presented to the girl a great bunch of fragile poppies, pungently fragrant marigolds, and glowing nasturtiums. The stems of the marigolds were long. Bits of root even clung to some of them.

"Oh, aren't they lovely! But I'm afraid you shouldn't have— Oh, no, you shouldn't have! They are all she had. And I know she must have loved them where they were. And in this heat they will only die."

The woman had risen to show the man to the good chair she had first brought out, but now she stood, her lips trembling slightly, mutely staring out at the trampled garden patch, where not a flower remained.

Impulsively the girl rose from her little chair.

"Oh, I'm so sorry—so sorry! If I had only known!"

"What a tableau!" commented the man. "What does it matter? My dear, there is nothing too good to be given to

you. What else could the flowers have been there for?"

The woman turned dully from the vision of desecration. After all, this girl and this man—they were her guests.

"It—it's all right. I'm glad that—that they were there for you. They were all I could give. And you're very welcome. Won't you set down?"

The man moved toward the old rocking-chair.

"Not that one, sir. It won't hold. This one—this is better."

"Oh, this is good enough!"

"Please take the one she offers."

"Why, this one's all right. Just a bit loose hung, but—"

He swung it around with a jerk.

"But I know she prizes it, and that it will break! Please do as I ask you—please!"

With smiling, fatuous obstinacy, he seated himself heavily on the old woman's chair, and it did buckle beneath his weight, finally cracked, and broke beyond repair.

He extricated himself with ill grace.

"Well, now, that's too bad! But what do you hang on to a rickety old thing like that for? I'll send you a better one."

The old woman had cowered up against the wall when the chair went down. The aching of her heart had become actually physical in its intensity.

The old rocker and the fresh, pure flowers—just a minute ago they had been still hers; she had been babbling of them to this girl; and now! Now?

And they were her guests, the man and this girl. And to guests—gentleness and courtesy.

"It—it won't matter," she answered, steadying her voice. "It was so old. Yes. But don't send another one. I have this one still. A good one, you see. Would you like a glass of water?"

She turned to the girl.

"No? Some milk, then, cool from the spring house? No? We have so little to give."

"Ah, but you have given me the loveliest flowers in the world!" cried the girl impetuously.

"Oh, the flowers—yes."

When the man had gone down the steps toward the lane, the girl lingered behind a moment.

"Are you going to marry—him?"

The girl glanced pityingly down at the withering flowers in her hand.

"No," she replied steadily.

With here a glint of sun-touched brass and there the sheen of dark-blue enamel, the car preceded a wave of dust

along the little-traversed road, and passed finally around a distant bend and out of sight.

The old woman went again into her room, carefully hung away in the closet her best blue calico wrapper and the clean gingham sunbonnet, and then, as she was, fell upon her bed, with her face buried in the yielding white softness of her pillow.

SONG PRIMITIVE

DAY comes with a fleet white running of feet
O'er the rim of the night's escarp;
And the wind of the land with a mighty hand
From her hair, as the strings of a harp,
Strikes the chord of light that peals to the height
On the breath of the mountain borne,
And rolls down the free, wild surge of the sea,
In the primal anthem of morn.

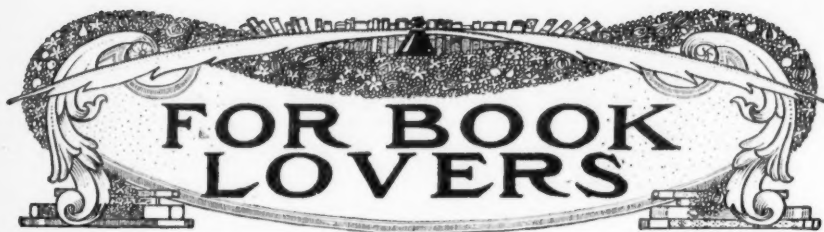
The forest wakes, and the windflower shakes
From its raptured rest by the rill,
While with somber tread, o'er the mountain head,
Come the pines down the granite hill
Where the dark winds flock to the shepherd rock
In the pasture of storms—to the lea,
Through the crumbling walls of the white mist halls,
To the risen blue of the sea.

And my pulses beat with a life complete
As I leap with a cry from the sod,
And my soul is a stringed harp that shall ring
From under the fingers of God,
With a mighty song, till the echoes throng
All the year's white path to the spring;
It shall thunder back down the world-long track—
The Song of my Wandering!

And I laugh, and I pray, and I follow the day,
'Neath the wind of the dawn unfurled,
Through the leagues of pine to the white sea wine,
Down the sounding shore of the world.

*Oh, thou my way, my harp of day,
My woman-earth in spring!
My love, my quest, my waking rest,
My end of journeying!
Thou mist of moon, my wind at noon,
Thou waters' melody,
And starlit stills among my hills,
My morning—on—the—sea!*

CONSTANCE SKINNER.



FOR BOOK LOVERS

IN her new book, "The Marriage Portion," published by Small, Maynard & Co., Mrs H. A. Mitchell Keays generously permits us to gaze upon the conjugal life of a group of professors in the most important university in America, and observe the action and reaction upon their lives of the personality of one Adela.

If there is any moral to the book, it must be that the marital estate is difficult for the college professor, and therefore to be avoided. But it also embodies other elements of instruction.

Carefully and painstakingly, the author undertakes to show just how culture is regarded in select academic circles—that is, negligently, with a dilettante detachment, with the air of ignoring it outwardly while inwardly cherishing it. This, we are led to infer, is the correct ideal of culture; yet somehow it fails. The professors wear their rarefied culture a trifle self-consciously, proudly, and yet miserably sure that the eyes of the world are upon them.

The heroine, Adela, is the chill, pale, near-emancipated type; and almost equally so is Julian Ware, who is merely an unimportant, exotic young woman in trousers. But they fit in well with the entire group of anemic sensualists. The characters frequently accuse each other of being Puritans at heart, and the reader is tempted to wonder whether to be a Puritan is to discuss sex frequently as a "problem" and a "question," and to analyze, and analyze, and analyze, instead of living.

After dwelling for a season among these morbid and degenerate seekers after "life" and "knowledge," one closes

the book, content, like St. Paul, to be a fool.



J. M. Barrie is quoted as saying that a new novel by Leonard Merrick is one of the events of the year, and nine times out of ten this, in our opinion, is correct.

"The Position of Peggy," published by Mitchell Kennerley, however, is the tenth book which is distinctly not an "event," for it is a sordid tale, dealing with sordid and uninteresting people, is quite lacking in that individual and gay wit so characteristic of most of the other Merrick stories, and in the end shows, cynically enough, the triumph of inefficiency over merit.

One is rather inclined to regret the fact that Mr. Merrick evidently wrote the book with "a purpose," namely, to depict the misery of stage life in England, the almost hopeless chance of recognition unless the actor has money of his own, or well-nigh incredible luck, the poor pay, the indifference to ability.

Peggy is a pretty, ordinary little cockney, with no aptitude for her profession, and becomes engaged to a very decent and capable young fellow named Totham, whose efforts to become an actor and then a playwright are attended with indifferent success. They struggle along until a famous playwright discovers in Peggy the exact type he needs for a certain part in his new play, and patiently drills her into it. She makes a hit, becomes an acknowledged London favorite, and, of course, throws Totham overboard.

Mr. Merrick shows such a savage and ironical scorn for "the superficial op-

timism that is always welcome" that he is rather depressing, and one's thoughts turn longingly to the delightful and sophisticated nonsense of "Conrad."



"The Heart of Life," published by E. P. Dutton & Co., is Pierre De Coulvain's latest book, in which she gives us the usual bulk of manuscript, with the usual slender thread of a story. Condensation seems utterly impossible for her. But one would have to be extremely hypercritical to cavil at that. Though she is a supreme egotist, her delicacy gives her book a peculiar charm.

In all of the innumerable dialogues, the second person's function is merely to draw out Pierre De Coulvain, to provide her with an excuse for giving utterance to views upon every subject under the sun—views in the main wise, witty, original, and stimulating to the imagination of the reader. She provokes a train of thought and sets his ideas flowing.

The love story concerns a charming and modern young Frenchwoman and her husband, from whom she has been divorced. The author divines that, in spite of their separation, the young couple still love each other, and therefore undertakes to play the part of the peacemaker, and finally succeeds in bringing about a reconciliation between the estranged lovers.

But, although they are very attractive young persons, the attention of the reader is not focused upon them. It is the author who holds the center of the stage from the time the curtain goes up until it descends, to the reader's entire satisfaction.



"Christopher," by Richard Pryce, published by Houghton, Mifflin & Co., is a novel far above the average. We are given to understand that this is Mr. Pryce's first book, and it is a pleasure to give it the warm welcome which it deserves, for there is in it none of the crudity of the amateur.

So far as the story is concerned, there is nothing very remarkable about it; the story, indeed, is quite subordinated to the characterization, the charm, the mature and mellow observation, and the humor which pervades it.

Christopher is a most attractive young fellow, and we have plenty of time to become acquainted with him, inasmuch as we are introduced to him at the moment of his birth on the high seas.

All of the other characters, particularly Granny Exeter and Grandmother Herrick, are more than usually interesting, because they are individual and original, and in their delineation show Mr. Pryce's sympathy and understanding.



"Janey," published by Henry Holt & Co., is Inez Haynes Gilmore's latest book.

We are told on the cover that "Janey" is a book primarily for parents, but that it is open also to grandparents and young folks. The statement is inadequate, for it is a story calculated to satisfy the tastes of the general reader without distinction of age or class.

Janey herself is a perfectly natural and normal little girl, and goes through the usual adventures of childhood, the usual interests and curiosities. How these interests and curiosities are either baffled or gratified is the theme of the book. Each chapter, depicting a stage in Janey's advancing development, is, however, a separate story in itself.

The book is unique as a book of children's stories. Miss Gilmore seems to possess the gift of understanding with respect to childhood psychology, and without effort opens the eyes of her readers to the wonders of that human fairyland where everything is possible and everything is plausible. It is a world of romance, but entirely different from the grown-up idea of romance, and even of more intense reality.

The story is told with a wit and sparkle, and that straightforward simplicity of narration that is a natural gift because it is spontaneous.

Another new book by Leonard Merick is published by Mitchell Kennerley under the title, "The Actor Manager."

He has written more amusing stories than this, but none in which he has carried his analysis of temperament and motive so far or to such inevitable conclusions.

Royce Oliphant is a young actor and dramatist who cherishes tenaciously the idea of becoming an actor manager, not of the ordinary type, and he voices his convictions in a manner so pertinent to the hour as to make them worth quoting: "It seems to me that the stage might teach as high a lesson as the pulpit, that it might be the loudest, greatest voice in all the world, more powerful than the church, for the church is precept and the stage is action, more intimate than the sister arts, because it speaks in a simpler tongue. And it should be art—but art is revelation."

The story is the realization of Oliphant's dream and the forces in his life which turn that dream to dust and ashes. Unfortunately he marries, and in his wife, Blanche Ellerton, Mr. Merick gives a picture of the selfish, grasping, beautiful actress, who neither cares for, nor comprehends, her husband's ideals, but who will sacrifice them to any extent to obtain money to exploit herself and further her social ambitions. His final refusal any longer to comply with her demands enrages her, and at last she frees him by eloping with a wealthy man.



"The Mystery of the Boule Cabinet," by Burton E. Stevenson, published by Dodd, Mead & Co., is a rather gruesome detective story about an exquisite cabinet which, before its secrets are discovered, scatters death impartially among innocent and guilty.

It is the counterpart of one which adorns the Salle Louis XIV. in the Louvre, but is supposed to be the original built at the order of Madame De Montespan. Of course, it has secret

drawers, belonging to a lady with so many secrets of her own and others. One of the drawers is fitted with a mechanism which, when it is opened, pierces the hand and deposits two drops of the deadliest poison of the Medici.

Both of these drawers—there are two—contain articles of immense value, one, the love letters of a beautiful duchesse which she must recover, and the other, the famous diamonds of a Russian grand duke, stolen from him by the greatest criminal in France. The cabinet is sent by mistake to an innocent collector in New York, and the French rogue, Crochard, follows to claim it. Pigot, France's cleverest detective, follows, and in New York the duel between them is fought out. The fact that Crochard wins leads us to believe that this story is the first of a series, for certainly the greatest detective of France cannot be permanently balked.



Important New Books.

"The Big Fish," H. B. Marriott Watson, Little, Brown & Co.

"The Postmaster," Joseph C. Lincoln, D. Appleton & Co.

"Through the Postern Gate," Florence Barclay, G. P. Putnam's Sons.

"The Green Vase," William R. Castle, junior, Dodd, Mead & Co.

"The Sentence of Silence," Reginald Wright Kauffman, Moffat, Yard & Co.

"The Man in Lonely Land," Kate Langley Bosher, Harper & Brothers.

"The Prison Without a Wall," Ralph Straus, Henry Holt & Co.

"The Unknown Woman," Anne Warwick, John Lane Co.

"The Promised Land," Mary Antin, Houghton, Mifflin & Co.

"The Mystery of No. 47," J. Stover Clouston, Moffat, Yard & Co.

"The White Waterfall," James Francis Dwyer, Doubleday, Page & Co.

"Country Neighbors," Susan Taber, Duffield & Co.

"Jaconetta Stories," Fannie Heaslip Lea, Sturgis & Walton Co.

"The Butterfly House," Mary E. Wilkins Freeman, Dodd, Mead & Co.

"The Under Trail," Anna Alice Chapin, Little, Brown & Co.

Talks With Ainslee's Readers

IT occurs to us upon looking it over that if we had started out to put together an AINSLEE's that would illustrate the heroism of women, we could not have improved upon this present number. "The House-and-garden Woman" of Nalbro Bartley and the heroine of Margaret Burrous Martin's "Never a Welsher" both possess, in different forms, that calm, patient fortitude that is the mother of all masculine courage. "The Little Maid" of Marie Van Vorst is imbued with the same instincts. That this distinctly feminine quality seldom receives and never asks for the recognition and applause accorded mere courage is proof of the purity of its motives.



A MAIDEN IN DISTRESS," by Anna Alice Chapin, is the initial story of several to be built around the same characters. This gives us three unusually attractive series running in AINSLEE's at the same time. The second episode in the history of this fascinating light-fingered lady of Miss Chapin's is called "A Question of Duty"—customhouse duty, not the sort that is forever interfering with entertainment.

In the fourth of "The Marquis" series Andrew Soutar's modern knight of chivalry has a most surprising adventure because of "The Lady with the Auburn Hair."

You have read in the present number the second of Margaretta Tuttle's new "Nadine Carson" stories. If we are unable to give you the third in the August issue it will be because Mrs. Tuttle has been very busy weaving the earlier "Nadine" series, which brought her into such sudden literary prominence, into a novel. "Her Worldly Goods" is the title of it, and the Bobbs-Merrill Company, who publish the book, have given it a dress that Nadine Carson, herself, must approve of.

The same house, by the way, has issued in permanent form "The Broken Bell," Marie Van Vorst's exquisite Italian romance, which also appeared in AINSLEE's.

IT'LL do for a hot-weather number," means among the editors of many magazines that a story barely reaches the standard of one of their poorest issues; they wouldn't think of printing it in any of the fall numbers when they are putting their best feet forward with a view to enticing subscriptions for the coming year. With AINSLEE's, on the other hand, "it'll do for a hot-weather number" is one of the highest commendations that a story could have. To use a Hibernianism, we believe that a story in August must be better than a story in December in order to be as good. Fiction is food for the mind, and summer fiction should be like summer food: light and dainty and served in its most appetizing form. Bearing all this in mind we believe that we have prepared an August AINSLEE's that "will do for a hot-weather number."



FIRST of all there is the novelette, "The Eternal Two," by Marie Conway Oemler. It is told with delightful delicacy and charm that make one of the oldest stories in the world the very newest. We can imagine but two classes of people who will not fall under its spell: those who do not read it, and those who cannot read.

Typical of the dozen short stories that will make August seem less like August is "Ruth in Exile," a fresh, breezy romance with an irrepressible American for its hero. It is by P. G. Wodehouse, who will be remembered as the author of such sprightly novelettes in AINSLEE's as "The Prince and Betty" and "The Intrusions of Jimmy."

Robert E. MacAlarney contributes "Duke Rafferty, Probation Cop." The duke, one of the most glittering nuggets of the Harvard "gold coast," suddenly incurs the displeasure of his paternal source of revenue, and finds himself penniless in New York.

There's a girl in it, of course, who—But the name of the story tells as much as the rest of it as is fair to Mr. MacAlarney.

Marrying for a title is common enough

among American women, if we are to believe the newspapers. But when the title married for happens to be a plain "Mrs."—well, that's a different story. And it's a decidedly "different" story that Humphreys Hume has given us in "The Prefix of Patricia."

Herman Whitaker, who wrote "The Flirt" in this issue, contributes one of his charming Mexican love tales, full of the warmth and color of its setting. "The Miracle" is its title.

The stage story, "Rydal as Cyrano," by W. Carey Wonderly, is in some degree a modern version of the story of the original Cyrano. It's a tale that is able to retain much of its charm even when transplanted to the glare and bustle of Broadway.

Characteristic stories by F. Berkeley Smith and Frank Condon also furnish buoyancy to the number.



IT must not be imagined, however, that this coming AINSLEE'S is all fluff and sparkle; that it is lacking in backbone. There is a big, powerful romance of Alaska, by William Slavens McNutt, for one thing. Then Nalbro Bartley has written another of those

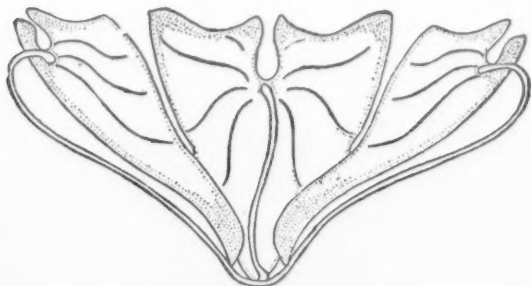
dramatic stories of the Philippines that have been attracting so much attention. "The Trouble Man" is, in our opinion, one of the very best of them.

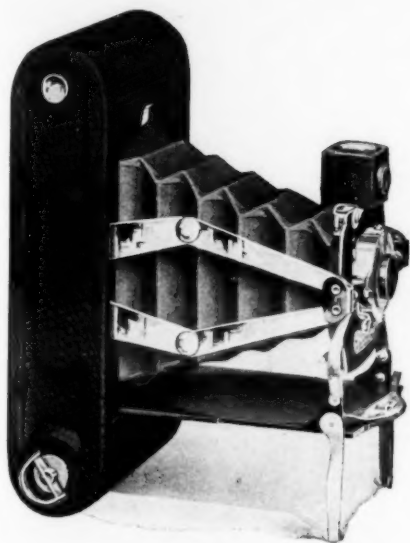
We are often asked by writers, "What sort of stories does AINSLEE'S want?" Alice Garland Steele has indirectly given us a partial answer to this difficult question in a light but significant tale called "The Mirror." It comes very close to being the ideal AINSLEE'S story of a certain type, and we commend it to those who are trying to find out what we want, as well as to those who read for entertainment.



THE coming installment of his reminiscences leads Frederick Townsend Martin through his first visit to London and Paris, incidentally recalling the triumphal entry into the English capital of the Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh, and the funerals of Napoleon III, and Victor Hugo. A chapter devoted to "Random Reminiscences of Paris" contains several amusing anecdotes of life in the French metropolis.

A good AINSLEE'S, this coming one; yes, even good enough to "do for a hot-weather number."





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and
Minnehaha**

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the cord is,
So unto the man
is woman."

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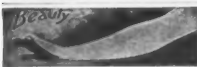
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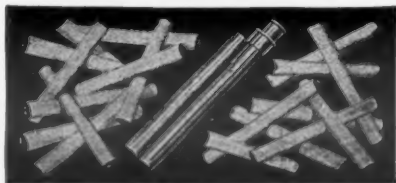
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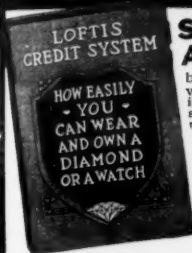
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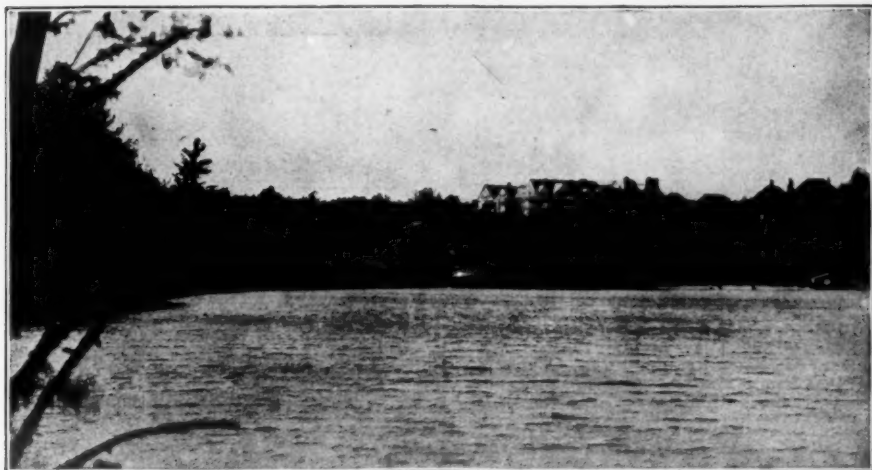
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It had to come. It HAS come! After years of research, eminent European chemists discovered some remarkable tonic properties in certain foods—just as gold lies in rock. These tonic substances were extracted and highly concentrated and they accomplish astonishing results in giving vitality, flesh, nerve-tone and good condition.

This great CONSTRUCTIVE discovery comes at the psychological moment too, for people are thin, nervous and rundown as never before—due to abnormal conditions. The constant strain, the incessant nerve wear have urgently demanded new, adequate tonic nutrients to repair and replace. *There's the condition.* Let us consider it sincerely and without prejudice!

Many people are so thin that they cover arms, necks and shoulders in stifling weather—and they are ashamed to bathe at the beaches. And nervous, fidgety, tired, depressed folks abound everywhere. These men and women want to gain flesh, nerve force and sound condition. They want to become plump, magnetic and attractive. Perfectly proper and natural. They will be thankful that Science has furnished the means.

Drugs and medicines disappointed because there are no constructive materials in drugs; but finally, science and common sense got together, worked faithfully and solved the problem. The result is the new, tonic discovery—just what the rundown system needs and must have—the ONLY way by which the long desired results can be obtained. It is no mere statement or theory, but Nature's way. Consequently it does the work.

Nothing succeeds like success and this discovery is a tremendous success. Why not? It works with the law of cause and effect. It produces the results; it satisfies that peculiar craving, it gives what ordinary food has failed to do. Sounds simple, but it took generations to find it.

CERTONE is drugless: GUARANTEED. It is far better than drugs. I studied in many European centres to secure this, the ideal combination of tonic food nutri-

ments. It contains one substance to make the blood rich and red; another to fatten, another to specially feed and build up the nerve-cells; another to tone up the stomach and improve the digestion. All in the safe, rational way.

CERTONE can do all this. *IT IS DOING IT*—every day. I know it. Delighted men and women know it far and wide. They are living, actual proofs of weight gained, refreshing sleep secured, digestion and appetite improved, and of the new happiness, vitality and efficiency which come with good health. Their grateful testimonials come to me steadily. Many from those who were most skeptical too.

Now I want YOU to know what CERTONE does. Seeing is believing. Results tell and Certone is results.

Supply your system with these repair and replenishment materials. Build up! Put on some good firm, protective flesh; gain new vitality and health. Take CERTONE and get "boiler-power". Repair and establish the tired body and over-worked nerves with the delightful tonic sustenance concentrated into CERTONE.

PROVE THIS DRUGLESS WONDER—FREE

Just see what the right, tonic, body-building nutrients will do for you and how quickly. I'll willingly bear the expense. Send your name and address with this coupon and I'll mail you FREE a box of CERTONE containing six days' supply. Note the good effects from the very first day. The new vigor, the daily progress, the calmer nerves, the whole system strengthened. Not mere stimulant, no temporary effects, but true lasting benefit because naturally acquired.

GEORGE A. SYKES, President,

Dept. 112.

542 Twelfth Ave., New York City

FREE COUPON

This coupon is good for one regular Fifty Cent Box of Certone. Pin coupon to your letter and I will send you the proof box of this remarkable, true, drugless tonic free and prepaid.

GEORGE A. SYKES, President,

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FORECLOSED
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IF YOUR home is mortgaged, it must worry you at times to think what might happen if you should die and your wife and children were left without the means to pay the principal or even to meet the interest payments as they come due. How could your family prevent the loss of the home and the humiliation of being turned out under foreclosure?

End your worry and protect them by placing the responsibility on The Travelers by a Life Insurance Policy which at your death will pay off the mortgage and provide in addition a fund for purchasing the necessities of life. One of our Guaranteed Low Cost Life insurance policies for an amount proportionate to your means will do this, or a Monthly Income policy will meet the interest payments and provide each month a certain income for the family.

Send to The Travelers Insurance Company, Hartford, Conn., for particulars. We will show you how to do it.

The Travelers Insurance Company, Hartford, Conn.

TEAR OFF

Send particulars. My name, address and date of birth are written below.

Ains.

Please mention this magazine when answering advertisements.



The Right of All the Way

Railroad service and telephone service have no common factors—they cannot be compared, but present some striking contrasts.

Each telephone message requires the right of all the way over which it is carried. A circuit composed of a pair of wires must be clear from end to end, for a single conversation.

A bird's-eye view of any railroad track would show a procession of trains, one following the other, with intervals of safety between them.

The railroad carries passengers in train loads by wholesale, in a public conveyance, and the service given to each passenger is limited by the necessities of the others; while the telephone carries messages over wires devoted exclusively for the time being to the individual use of the subscriber or patron. Even a multi-millionaire could not afford the exclusive use of the railroad track between New York and Chicago.

But the telephone user has the whole track and the right of all the way, so long as he desires it.

It is an easy matter to transport 15,000 people over a single track between two points in twenty-four hours. To transport the voices of 15,000 people over a single two-wire circuit, allowing three minutes for each talk, would take more than thirty days.

The telephone system cannot put on more cars or run extra trains in order to carry more people. It must build more telephone tracks—string more wires.

The wonder of telephone development lies in the fact that the Bell System is so constructed and equipped that an exclusive right of all the way, between near-by or distant points, is economically used by over 24,000,000 people every day.

AMERICAN TELEPHONE AND TELEGRAPH COMPANY
AND ASSOCIATED COMPANIES
One Policy One System Universal Service



**REMINGTON
UMC**

ARROW
and

**NITRO
CLUB**

**Steel Lined
SHOT SHELLS**

The Remington
Cubs cut into
a good one

Each and Every One a Speed Shell

The speed that breaks your targets nearer the trap. That's why *Remington-UMC* Steel Lined Shells have won 13 out of the 15 Handicaps held in the last three years.

The speed that gets that mile-a-minute "duck" with a shorter lead—that's why it takes over 50,000 dealers to handle the demand for *Remington-UMC* Steel Lined Shells..

The shooting fraternity are speed wise. They know loose smokeless powder won't drive shot. They know that the drive depends on the compression.

The powder charge in *Remington-UMC* shells is gripped in steel. This lining is designed to give the exact compression necessary to send the load to the mark quickest. It insures speed—the same speed in every shell.

The steel lining is moisture proof—no dampness can get through. Jar proof—no powder can get out. Waste proof—no energy is lost.

Shoot *Remington-UMC* Steel Lined Shells

Get All the Drive of the Powder Behind Every Shot

Remington-UMC—the perfect shooting combination

Remington Arms - Union Metallic Cartridge Co.
299 Broadway New York City

*"There is Beauty
in Every Jar"*



TAKE Milk-
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on your summer
outings. It gives the
skin softness, whitens
it and increases its re-
sisting power, making
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to ravages of sun and wind.

Ingram's Milkweed Cream

Apply Milkweed Cream *gently*—without rubbing—twice a day. It gives your skin power to resist flabbiness, and the lines of time. It protects against rough winds, redness, freckles and sunburn. Price, 50 cents and \$1.00.

Preserves Good Complexions—Improves Bad Complexions

A PERSONAL TEST: Let us prove to you the value of Ingram's Toilet Specialties. Write us the name and address of your druggist, and we will send you, FREE, through him, a box of assorted samples of our toilet essentials. Or, enclose ten cents, and we will mail the samples direct to you. Address

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Bon Ami

For the Hands

When your hands get too grimy for ordinary toilet soaps, borrow the Bon Ami from the kitchen and you'll find it takes off the dirt and stain like magic. Remove ink stains with it. Bon Ami won't hurt the hands a bit, even if you use it all the time.

For White Shoes

Yes, Bon Ami cleans white shoes better than the special cleaners do. It dissolves the grime and stains and leaves the shoe as clean as new instead of merely painting the dirt white. No chalky dust to rub off on skirts. A cleaning with Bon Ami lasts longer, too.


THE BON AMI COMPANY, NEW YORK

Other Uses

For cleaning and polishing windows, mirrors, brass, nickel, painted woodwork, tiling and bath tubs, nothing else equals Bon Ami.

"Ham't scratched yet."





Swift's Premium Bacon

THE "Swift Premium" cure does more than give a delicious and characteristic flavor. It makes the bacon firm and tender—always dependable because always the same. "Swift's Premium" slices like wax and the cook has no difficulty to brown and crisp it evenly on the broiler.

"Swift's Premium" Bacon has a *thin* ring—meaning young pork, is nicely streaked with lean and becomes the favorite brand in the household.

U. S. Government Inspected and Passed



For sale at all dealers, either in the piece or sliced in glass jars.

Swift & Company, U. S. A.





Powerful Physical Forces

Must be Governed by Mind and Brain

To Secure Results

Grape=Nuts

FOOD

supplies true nourishment for brain work.

Made of selected parts of wheat and barley, Grape-Nuts is rich in Phosphate of Potash—the vital tissue salt of gray nerve and brain cells.

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